

Matthew 11:25-30 Come to Jesus for Rest! Pentecost 7 July 23, 2017

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and from Jesus Christ who gives us true rest!

We read from the Gospel lesson Matthew 11:25-30.

Heavenly Father, please use these words to guide us to our eternal rest. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian Friends,

Summer is supposed to be a time when people take vacations and get rest. But, how often people rest on vacation is another matter. Too often when people need rest the most to stay healthy and strong, they rest less. How much more we need spiritual rest! We don't need a vacation to get it. Daily God tells us:

Come to Jesus for rest!

Only Jesus provides true rest! Why do so many people not realize the blessing of having rest in Christ? In our verses, Jesus praised His heavenly Father that He did not reveal the Word to the "*wise and learned.*" (v.25) This does not mean that God didn't want some people to be saved. Just before Jesus' words, His disciples had been on a mission journey where some people had rejected their words while others believed. Those who rejected were either self-righteous people who had no room for Jesus' message of forgiveness or the "worldly wise" who placed work or pleasure or outright sin above Jesus' message.

Despite many people rejecting His Word, Jesus called out: "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (v.28) What things weary or burden us? We can get weary from work or in caring for other people. We read in the Old Testament lesson that Moses got burned out from leading the Israelites through the wilderness. We may lay awake at night because of a pain or a problem we can't solve. We have made mistakes in the past and have suffered the consequences. Even future events in life can make us worry or fear so we end up weary and burdened.

Worse than physical and emotional troubles, we have the burden of God's law. As Christians, we know that Jesus died for our sins. We know that He took our punishment. Yet, like Paul, we too often fall into temptation. We feel burdened by it. We may also feel embarrassed when we other Christians express a strong faith that we should have. Then, there's the burden we carry when we sin but we don't confess it to God. King David wrote how he felt when he had not confessed his sin of adultery, "*my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.*" (Psalm 32:4) Jesus does NOT want us to carry these burdens alone!

He said, "*Come to me... and I will give you rest.*" (v.28) Confess your sins and bring your burdens to Jesus! What kind of rest does He give? He does not guarantee an end to all problems. He does not promise that we will always sleep at night without a care. But Jesus is with us as our Savior no matter what we are facing. Earlier we read how Moses talked with God and pleaded that God go with them to the Promised Land. God answered, "*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*" (Exodus 33:14) Moses still had problems later. But, God was with him with His love, care, and saving power. There will always be challenges for us in life; but when our powerful and loving Savior is with us, we can rest in His presence.

Psalm 62 states, "*My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him.*" (v.1) Think about Peter, whose life we will be studying next week in Vacation Bible School. After he denied knowing Jesus three times, he must have felt terrible. But later, Jesus appeared to him and forgave his sins and He restored Peter as a disciple. All of us have sinned, and all of us have been forgiven by Christ's death on the cross. When we fail to live as forgiven children of God, Jesus gives us rest when He reminds us that as our substitute He never failed to live perfectly. God accepts us only through Christ! If we can't find spiritual rest in this good news, we need more time learning God's promises and praying that the Holy Spirit help us and spend less time worrying and hurrying!

Jesus' goal in offering us rest is eternal life. It states in Revelation 14: *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.... They will rest from their labor...."* (v.13) Sometimes we may feel like the Apostle Paul that life is like a constant battle with no rest. He wanted to go to heaven to experience eternal rest. There will be no sickness, pain, sadness, tiredness, or death. Rather, heaven will be: having eternal reunions of family and friends in Christ, having glorious bodies that never need rest, and having life that is new each moment so that we never tire of it. Now that is the true rest that only Jesus provides!

Second, we are to take Jesus' yoke. He said, *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me ... and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (v.29, 30) A yoke was a wooden harness for two animals so they could plow or pull a cart. It seems strange to us that in one breath Jesus gives rest and in the next He tells us to put on His yoke. The Jews listening to Jesus would have thought about the Rabbis of their time that often told them to follow the yoke of God's law. But, Jesus was not replacing one set of rules for another! His yoke was the opposite! Martin Luther pictured God's yoke as bringing us closer to Christ. He wrote, **"Christ's [yoke] does not oppress us, but makes us light and itself lifts up...."** (Kretzmann) Can you picture us yoked to Jesus with our feet not even touching the ground as He carries the whole load! We are all born with a yoke of sin. Jesus took off that yoke of the law that condemns us as sinners. When He said, *"Take my yoke upon you"* (v.29), He meant: *"Trust in Me as your Savior!"* Jesus' invitation to "come to Him" and "take His yoke" has power to give us faith in Him so that His blessings become ours. Through faith we are yoked with Jesus who carried away our sins. It states in 1 Peter, *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness."* (1 Peter 2:24)

His yoke also gives us a purpose and direction in life. Once Peter was restored to faith he gladly served Jesus and openly spoke about Him to anyone. Earlier Jesus praised His heavenly Father that He revealed His saving truth *"to little children."* (v.25) Jesus wasn't only talking about people of a young age, but people with a child-like faith. They realized that they had no ability to save themselves. Like young David fighting Goliath, believers have a simple trust in God's promises to save them. Any of us who listen to God's Word and take it to heart are the *"children"* to whom God has revealed His saving truth.

What if a person came to you and said, "I am not certain that I will be saved. I done some bad things, so I don't think that God will forgive or save me"? How would you yoke that person to Christ? *John 3:16-17: "God so loved the world...."* *1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* *Romans 8:1: "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."* *Mark 16:16: "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved...."*

When a farmer needed to yoke two animals together to plow a field, he tried to choose a pair as similar as possible. Think how gracious God's choice is! He yoked us with Jesus, who carried our sins to the cross. He yoked us with Jesus to give us strength to walk by faith and He guides us so we remain on the path to heaven. Since we are yoked with Jesus we need only trust in Him to find the true rest we need for life.

There is no doubt that God made us to receive certain amounts of rest in life. But, more importantly, God made us to have spiritual rest. He has sent His Son to carry the burden of all our sins and die for them. Now, our living Savior offers eternal rest and powerfully invites us to come to Him by faith, to rest in His forgiveness, and to walk, yoked with Him, to eternal life! Amen.