

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobnier, Illinois
Pentecost 5A - Proper 9A
July 5, 2020
Matthew 11:25-30

Rest for the Weary Soul

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

Oh, how we need to hear Jesus today. For we are weary of our labor, whatever it is. We are heavy laden with suffering, disease, aches and pains, worry, stress, and troubles too numerous to mention. We are burdened by the turmoil and unrest in our world, our county, our state, and maybe even our families. With the world and our lives seeming to fall apart at the seams, we desire some rest and peace. We desire some sense of normalcy. The struggle is hard. There is much which lies heavily upon us. We are often worn out and exhausted. There seems to be no relief in sight. We really need rest.

Now before the Fall into sin, man's labor was not laborious. It was not burdensome. It was a joy because man lived in perfect harmony with God, and therefore with the whole of God's creation, including his wife. But when man fell into sin, everything changed. God told Adam, "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; . . . By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Gen. 3:17-19). No wonder we're tired. Labor is hard work.

Yet if we hear our Lord's words offering rest only as relief from our daily work, our earthly struggles, then we may very well miss out on the fullness of the rest He would give us.

For our greatest labor and that with which we are most heavily laden, or burdened, has to do with sin. That's what Paul was getting at in today's Epistle reading. Did you hear his struggle? "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me." (Rom. 7:15, 18-20). That's hard work and a great burden! As a child of God, he wanted to do what God's Word directed him to do, but he failed miserably. He struggled against his sin with every ounce of his might. No one can deny that he labored mightily, that he was engaged in a tremendous spiritual battle. Yet he confesses that while he often failed, he kept struggling, laboring against his sin. It was such a heavy burden that he

exclaimed, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). That's a heavy burden indeed.

So what about us? What about you? Do you struggle against your sin? Or do you all too readily, easily, and willingly give in to it? Do you struggle to please God, or yourself? Do you strive to follow Jesus? Or do you go your own way, following the ways of the world? Do you labor against your sinful flesh which leads you against God's perfect Law? Or do you simply submit to whatever you want to do? Do you carry a burden of sin you just can't get rid of? Are you wracked by guilt? Do you relate to Paul's exclamation, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

If so, there's good news for you today. For the solution to Paul's burden and struggle is your's too. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25). For Jesus is the One who invites you to come to Him for rest.

And He will give it to you. Indeed, He is the only One who can. For He knows your weariness, your burdens, your weaknesses, your grief, your sufferings, your sin, your guilt, and has done battle with it. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; . . . he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. . . . the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Is. 53:4-6). Yes, Jesus bore the burden of the world's sin and suffered God's wrath and judgment. By His rest in the tomb and glorious resurrection He gives you rest.

You see, Jesus doesn't offer such rest to those who have their lives together, who think they have no sin and are pure and righteous, or who fancy themselves as being wise and learned (or prudent). They don't feel the need for such rest, or, if they do, they want it on their own terms. But to you who are poor in spirit, who struggle against your sin yet so often fail, to you who are burdened and bothered by sin and guilt and shame, Jesus does give much needed rest.

Now, the rest Jesus gives is not necessarily an end to all the problems we face in this life, but it is an end to trusting in our work and our striving concerning them, especially our efforts to make things right with God. The book of Hebrews says, "There remains a Sabbath rest for God's people. For the one who has entered God's rest has ceased from his works, as God did from his" (Heb. 4:9-10). You see, Jesus bore the heaviest burden of all when He was crucified for the sins of the world. He carried that crushing weight of sin and guilt as He carried His cross and as He was hung on it to die. He was not relieved of even one of mankind's sins. He bore them *all*, the big and the small. So we need not trust in any of our works *at all* to deal with them. Rather, we look only to Jesus and His works for rest. In truth, His yoke is easy and His burden light.

So you don't have to put on a happy face while you carry a load of guilt and shame on the inside. Rather, you can confess the full depth of your sin unafraid that Jesus will reject you if He knows how bad you really are. After all, He already does know and He promises you, "The one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

So come to Jesus for rest because *He* is your rest. Come to hear Him say, "I forgive you all your sins." Come to Jesus and hear Him say, "Take eat, this is my body; Take drink, this is my blood." And in that Holy Meal every one of your sins are forgiven, your burden of sin is lifted, and you find true and lasting rest for your soul.

So it is that Jesus says to you, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He invites you to confess your sins and receive His absolution, His forgiveness. Through that forgiveness you are strengthened to trust Him more and more in your struggle with your sin and in dealing with those other things which burden you. For the One who invites you to come to Him for rest, also says, "[cast] all your care upon [Me], for [I care] for you" (1 Peter 5:7). And having received some measure of rest even in this life, you will find unending rest in the world to come. Indeed, one day, you will rest from your labors in body and in soul; in Jesus' name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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