

Jesus Offers Perfect Rest

Matthew 11:25-30

²⁵ At that time, Jesus continued, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from clever and learned people and have revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, because this was pleasing to you. ²⁷ Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him. ²⁸ "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

I need a vacation. Maybe you recently heard that from a co-worker. Maybe you've made the statement yourself. We're at that time of year when many people are taking vacations. Why do we take vacations? Is it just to satisfy the desire to see another part of the world? Is it just to discover a new form of entertainment we've never experienced before? The main reason for a vacation is rest. Like a lot of things in life, rest is not man's idea. It is God's. After creating the world we live in, God rested on the seventh day. When he passed out food in the desert for forty years, he instructed his people to collect twice as much on the day before the Sabbath. That way they could rest on the Sabbath Day. The word Sabbath means rest. God gave us the Sabbath so we could get some needed R & R for the body. He also wanted us to get some rest for our souls as well. And that would explain why his Son entered our world. As we take to heart our Savior's words in Matthew 11, we are reminded to come to Jesus for rest. He offers us perfect rest. It's a rest we definitely need. It is a rest that only Jesus can provide.

Jesus entered our world two thousand years ago to bring us some well-needed rest. But there were some people not wanting the rest that Jesus was offering. Jesus described them as clever and learned people. In our Lord's day many of them were known as Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. They didn't want rest from Jesus. They didn't want anything from him. They rejected the message he was preaching. In our text, Jesus prays to his Father, *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from clever and learned people and have revealed them to little children. "These things" that God had hidden from the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law was God's gracious plan to save mankind. Both Jesus and John the Baptist were busy sharing that message. But the clever and learned didn't want to hear it. A few verses before our text, Jesus tells us: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (11:18, 19). The clever and learned were not smart enough to see how much they needed rest for their souls.*

Unfortunately, the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law had quite an influence on God's people. They were considered experts in God's Law. People looked to them for the

answers. But they weren't doing God's people any good. They failed to bring them rest for their souls. Instead they made the people weary and burdened by strapping them down with a heavy yoke. They taught the people that they had to earn God's favor by being just as righteous as they appeared to be. But Jesus knew what kind of men they were. They were hypocrites. And Jesus knew what they were doing to his people. In chapter 23 of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said, *"They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them"* (23:4). With their own self-righteousness, the clever and learned were on a path to eternal destruction. And they were dragging the rest of God's people with them.

That is why Jesus came with a gracious invitation to get people some well-needed rest. *"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* The heavy yoke of God's law that they leaders were always holding over them wearied their consciences. Their souls were burdened with guilt because God's law is very effective at showing you how much you have sinned against God. These people needed rest. Only when they came to Jesus, would they find the rest they needed for their souls.

The apostle Paul also needed some rest for his soul. Paul was so thankful that God took him from being a clever and learned Pharisee. He was thankful that God had given him a childlike faith in Jesus. Paul had every reason to live his life in thankful love for his Savior. He only wanted to do what pleased his God. But then he found himself doing things that are ungodly. Every day he found himself sinning against his Lord. We heard about it in our second Scripture reading. Paul had a war going on inside. His sinful flesh was warring against his new spirit in Christ. Maybe when you listened to Paul describe his struggle in Romans chapter 7, you thought, hey, I've got the same thing going on in me. I want to live my whole life for Jesus. But there isn't a single day that I don't slip up. Either it's some impure thoughts that keep crossing my mind, or its some less than tasteful words that keep slipping out of my mouth. I know what Paul is saying. I want to live my life for Jesus. But I keep sinning. What miserable wretch I am too. That struggle inside keeps wearing me out. God's law that should guide me in thankful living remains a burden to me because it brings all my sins to light. Who can rescue me? In others words, where can I turn for some well-needed rest? Paul gave us the answer: *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (7:25). When we turn to Jesus, we find some well-needed rest.

Some people don't want to admit it, but they need to take it easy. They need to get away from work for a while. Maybe even take a vacation. They need some well-needed rest. You and I need rest for our souls. We sin daily. Every one of those sins merits God's punishment. Yes, we do need rest for our souls. We need to answer Jesus' invitation to come to him for rest. Only Jesus can provide the rest we need.

The people in Jesus' day needed to turn to him for rest. They weren't going to find any rest from their clever and learned leaders. The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law had locked them in a yoke that demanded perfection. But then Jesus came with an invitation

they dare not refuse. He offered rest for their souls. That rest came when they learned about Christ's redeeming work. Yes, the yoke of God's law demands perfection. Jesus would supply that holiness with his own life. The yoke of the law called for punishment for sin. Jesus took that punishment himself and suffered for every violation against God's holy law. That was the yoke that Jesus was offering people. His yoke brought rest for souls. He said, *"For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Martin Luther preached on this text some 500 years ago. In that sermon, Luther said, *"It is as if Christ were saying: Don't be afraid of my yoke. The yoke of the law, under which you have been living up to now, was heaven; but my yoke is not so heavy...The yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light, not only because he takes away ceremonies and human ordinances, but also the whole law, the curse, the sin, the death, and everything that can happen to us on account of the law"* (Luther's Works, 51:130,132).

The yoke of Christ is easy and light because it shows us our salvation does not depend on anything we have done. It all depends on what Christ did for all. He lived our life to perfection. He died our death covering our sin completely. He return to life. He paid our price. He won us God's favor. He shows us a side of God we could never see under the yoke of his law. We see the loving and forgiving side of God. u side is shown us by Jesus. Jesus said in our text: *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from clever and learned people and have revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, because this was pleasing to you. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him."* Jesus invited the people who were wearied by sin and burdened by law to come to him for rest. Only Jesus can provide rest for their souls.

Jesus invites you and me to come to him to find rest for our souls. That's why we come to church. We are here to find forgiveness and rest for our souls. We get to join him in a holy supper. We come to Jesus because he invites us to come. If you say no thank you to his invitation, you lose out on the rest Jesus gives your soul. It can be kind of sad when we offer that invitation to our unchurched neighbors to come and see Jesus, but they don't seem too interested at the moment. But where else are they going to find rest for their sin-wearied souls? So we keep inviting. And we pray for patience when the first, or second, or fifth or ninth time they say no thank you. But then comes the time the do say yes. It's because God will place something in their life that reminds them they are mortal. It might be results from a medical test. It might be the loss of someone close. God has made it clear to them that they are not in control and they need God in their life. How wonderful that you came through with your gospel invitation to come to Jesus for rest. Your invitation changed their life. And soon they will have a relationship with our Savior. And someday you will see them in heaven. What joy awaits all of us for our Savior's invitation to come to him for rest.