

REST for weary souls

Matthew 11:25-30

Pastor Jim Rademaker

Jesus sends out the twelve, and what does He tell them? *"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves ... you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. ... You will be hated by everyone because of me ... I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ... a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."*

And then, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* Rest? Does that sound like rest to you? That sounds more like war. That sounds like chaos. That sounds like pain and suffering. Rest? What's Jesus talking about? What kind of rest is that? Certainly, not any rest we would think of!

The life of a follower of Jesus. It's a constant battle. A battle between good and evil. In our world today, the way things are going, it's easy to see the battle "out there", in what seems to be, among other things, an ever-increasing hostility toward Jesus and His followers. But it's harder to see the *other* battle. The one each of us fights within.

C.S. Lewis put it this way, "No man knows how bad he is, until he has tried to be good." Have you ever tried to be good? I mean really good? Perfectly good? To truly love God, all the time? Put Him and His will above your own, all the time? And to truly really love your neighbor, in the same way? To not think of yourself, but only them, putting them above yourself? It's a battle, isn't it? A never-ending battle. And it wears us down. We grow tired. Worn out, on the inside. In our soul. Constantly trying to do the right thing, and failing more times than we care to admit.

Laws. Why do we have them anyway? The Ten Commandments. Why did God give them to us? Do we really need them? Wouldn't we be better off without them? Laws do what? They help keep order in our world. They protect us. They keep us safe. *God's* law does one other thing. The most important thing. God's Law protects us from ourselves. It reveals what's hidden. Our lack of love - for God, and for our neighbor - other people. God's Law is a mirror to the soul, revealing the true battle within.

Tired of the constant inner fighting. Worn out from the never-ending battle. That's what the Apostle Paul felt like. In Romans 7, he talks about what it's like being a follower of Jesus - having both, the new nature of Christ and the old nature of Adam. Both, living inside of him. You know how it goes, don't you? What happens to the good that Paul tries to do? He doesn't do it. And how about the evil he keeps trying to avoid? That, he keeps on doing. Any idea what that's like? Can you relate in any way? When you really want to do good, evil is right there, ready to thwart any good intentions you might have.

Jesus says to the rich young ruler it's like what? Keeping God's law is like trying to cram a camel through the eye of a needle. Pretty exhausting I imagine. Impossible! And so, in the end, after all your work, after all your effort, nothing but failure. How exhausting to the soul!

God's Law is good. A reflection of His goodness. But it's a burden. A heavy load. God's law does what? It wears us down. It completely humbles us, and brings us to the end of ourselves! As the apostle Paul cries out what? "Wretched man that I am!" "Who will RESCUE me from this battle of death!" Who will rescue me from myself! And Jesus says what? *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

Who will RESCUE you from your weary soul? *"Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

And Jesus says, *"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."*

Jesus seems pretty frustrated over His own generation, His own people, people who should have known better. He had just engaged some disciples of John, who was in Herod's prison, who asked whether He was actually the Christ or if they should look for someone else.

He compares His own generation to a bunch of spoiled religious brats. "We played a flute, and you didn't dance. We sang a dirge, a funeral march, and you didn't mourn." You never join the game, you just sit there on the sidelines with your arms folded and complain like bratty kids - it's too hard, it's too easy, I don't like it. John came

as a religious ascetic, a holy man who neither ate nor drank, and they concluded "He has a demon." And then Jesus came, never missing a party, eating and drinking, and they concluded, "He's a glutton and a drunkard, not to mention a friend of tax collectors and sinners." I wonder where we might fit in? The whiners or the complainers?

Jesus then chews out the cities He'd visited and done all sorts of miracles, saying that the cursed city of Sodom, the city that went up in flames at the time of Lot, would fare better in the judgment than the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and even Capernaum, His base of operations. All those miracles, all that preaching, all those mighty works, and not an ounce of faith to show for it. Even the Gentiles of Tyre and Sidon on the coast have more faith sense than the insiders of Capernaum and would have repented long ago.

I wonder what Jesus would say to us? How quick are we to repent? How quick are we to turn to Him in faith? To trust Him, above all else? It drives Jesus to prayer. Our text is Jesus' outburst of prayer to His Father. "*Father, Lord of heaven, thank you. Thank you for hiding the treasures of your kingdom from the wise and understanding.*"

They're so smart they think they don't have anything to learn. So smart, they think they don't need you. Thank you for hiding your goodness and mercy from those who think they have you all figured out. Thank you for hiding your wisdom under foolishness. Hiding your strength under weakness. Hiding your victory under defeat. Thank you for revealing these things to the little ones of faith." (William Cwirla)

"*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" *Come to ME, you laboring under the weight of the Law, weighed down by your burdened soul. Burdened by sin. Come to Me, and rest. Take up my yoke, the yoke of childlike faith and trust in me. I bore your burden on the cross, so that you don't have to. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and I will carry you.*

Trying to love God and put Him first in your life? Trying to love others and put their interests above your own? Trying to do good? Ever get tired of trying? Ever get tired of failing? *Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Rest at last! Not in circumstances, but in Christ. Inner rest. Rest of the soul. Rest in Christ, trusting Him, no matter what!*

"*Father, Lord of heaven, thank you. Thank you for hiding the treasures of your kingdom from the wise and understanding.* From the unrepentant and ungiveable. Thank you for revealing these things to the little ones of faith."

Life is burdening. We're called to bear one another's burdens. What is burdening you, causing you to groan and struggle and be heavy laden? Causing you pain and stress and worry? Whatever it is, Jesus wants it. He wants to bear it for you. And give you peace and rest in Himself.

"*All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one **knows** the Son except the Father, and no one **knows** the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses **to reveal him.*** Make known. Get to know. Notice, it's all about what? It's all about relationship. Knowing God. Being in relationship with Him! So what does Jesus say? Come! Come to Me. Come back to Me. Apart from Me, there is no real rest; no rest for your soul.

"*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*" Why? Because I'll carry your load. Yoke yourself to Me. Look to Me. Trust Me. And you will find what? Rest. Rest for your soul!

Remember the hymn? *I look not back ... I look not forward ... I look not round me ... I look not inward ... But I look up ...* Jesus is the rest for weary souls!

And so, we exclaim along with the Psalmist, *I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ... The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ... The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. ... The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. ... My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever!*

(Psalm 145:1-14)