

Get some rest!

Rest can be elusive, can't it? I mean, we know we need it. We know we can't work constantly or we'll burn out. We know we need it, and so we work hard to make time for it. But even so, rest can be hard to find.

You schedule a day off during the week. But when was the last time you got to rest during your whole day off? So often that's the only day you have to get done all that other work that you don't get paid for, right? The yard work, work around the house, projects you've haven't had time for.

And we make time for vacations during the year. But even then, it can be hard to get rest. It's extra work getting ready to go on vacation. On vacation, your work can follow you – in this age of smartphones and laptops, emails from your boss keep coming even when you're away. And then there's a pile of work waiting for you when you get back – everything you put off while you were on vacation. I've heard more than one of you say it when you get back from a vacation: You feel like you need another vacation!

Rest can be hard to find. The same is true when it comes to spiritual rest. Jesus reminds us there is a kind of tired and weary that no amount of vacation will fix. The soul-tired that you can't sleep away; in fact, it can even rob you of sleep. This is the kind of tired that everyone, whether they know it or not, needs rest for. But so many don't find it. In fact even as Christians, we can struggle to have it.

Which is why Jesus says what he says in the gospel lesson this morning. Jesus invitation to all the weary and burdened, "Get some rest!" Human wisdom can't find it. Only Jesus gives it.

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

²⁷ "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.

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, for 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. Human wisdom can't find it

"Come," Jesus says. And I don't think it's real hard to figure out how he said it, right? This isn't the angry parent who says to a naughty child, "Come here!" This is the friend inviting you to a meal, "Come, sit down." Jesus is speaking to us and giving us a gracious invitation to something wonderful. Something far better than what we're currently doing. It's the same kind

of invitation he'll make to you one day when he says, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, to the eternal inheritance prepared for you." But until that day, Jesus' invitation stands open even now: "Come."

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened." Weary – there's the spiritual tiredness, the spiritual fatigue Jesus talks about. It's a weariness that he says comes from being burdened – carrying something that's too heavy for us to carry. The picture Jesus uses here is a yoke – you know, that piece of wood that would go around an ox's neck to pull farm equipment. Picture that around a person's neck, growing weary and buckling under the weight.

So what is it? What is this burden Jesus talks about that makes us weary? Maybe I'll ask it this way: What burdens are you carrying? What's weighs you down and makes you spiritually tired? Part of what burdens us is certainly the problems we carry around with us. Family problems. Financial problems. Health problems. Hurts from living in a fallen creation. They're heavy – we get tired trying to carry them.

But if we're honest, there's something that weighs even heavier than that, isn't there? It's the weight of a guilty conscience. David, after he fell into adultery, expressed that in Psalm 32: "Your hand was heavy upon me...my bones wasted away; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."

This is the weary and burdened of a pastor who gets to the end of the week and looks at the visits he didn't get done...and thinks back to all the time he squandered during the week when he could have. It's the weary and burdened of a parent who can't look at their kids without thinking of all the ways they failed them as a father or mother. It's the burden of sins from the past that haunt you and sins from the present you just keep falling into. It's anyone who looks in mirror and sees someone far from the person God expects them to be.

Weary and burdened. That's us, isn't it? Whether it's the problems we carry or the heavier weight of our own sins we add...and it leaves us weary.

And Jesus says to us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened." There's something very important about Jesus' words here – he says "all." Jesus' invitation doesn't exclude anyone; and that means it certainly includes you. No matter how many or monumental your failures, Jesus invites you. No matter how great your guilt, your Savior means you. Think about the people he called – that woman by the well in Samaria, who had 5 failed marriages. Jesus gave her living water. Zacchaeus lived a life of swindling, and Jesus said, "I'm going to your house today." Jesus says no matter how heavy your spiritual baggage is, "Come."

II. *Only Jesus gives it*

But it's just as important that he says, "Come to *me*." Because it doesn't come naturally to us. Our tendency is to look elsewhere for rest. That's kind of what Jesus is getting at when he mentions how **these things** are hidden **from the wise and learned**. Human wisdom, natural human thinking, leads us to look for our own ways of finding rest, trying to get rid of what weighs us down.

And so 500 years ago, a weary and burdened man named Martin Luther headed to a monastery, looking for rest. Thinking that if he gave his life to God, spent hours a day fasting and praying, it'd bring him peace and quiet his guilty conscience. But it didn't. It just made the burden press harder.

I think we do the same thing. No, not joining monasteries – but trying to find rest on our own. And it just doesn't work. We make promises that we'll do better and be better, trying to salve our guilty consciences...but it doesn't. We beat ourselves up trying to atone for our burdens...but that doesn't take them away. We might try to ignore them by numbing our minds with entertainment, or filling our schedules so full that we don't have to think about our sins. But none of that can give us the rest we long for.

Friends, we can't find rest on our own. Like Jesus says here, it has to be revealed to us. And that's exactly what Jesus does when he says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." What a promise! The rest we long for and can't come up with...Jesus says he gives to us as a gift!

Only he can say these words. Only he can give us rest. And it's because of what he's already done with what burdens us. The laws of God that were too heavy for us to keep...Jesus placed himself under them and bore that burden for you perfectly in your place. No matter how big a failure you are, Jesus succeeded for you and credits his success to you. You can rest, knowing that God sees you as perfect for Jesus' sake. The sins that weigh heavy on your soul...Jesus already lifted them off of you and carried that burden to the cross where he died and took it away. It's a burden you no longer have to carry. You can rest, knowing that all of your sins are forgiven.

"Come to me, and I will give you rest." Yes, he even gives rest from all of the other problems that burden you. After all, this is the Jesus who is gentle – he cares for you. Whatever weighs heavy on your mind, it weighs heavier on his. And he's humble – he'll use his power as he always has, to serve you. Your problems may be beyond your ability to carry, but they're not beyond his strength to carry you through it.

"Come to me," Jesus says, and it's not just a one-time invitation. He knows what we're like. How we're tempted to shoulder what he already carried to the cross for us. How we beat ourselves up for what he was already punished for. How we try to carry ourselves what he offers to carry for us.

And so he says every day, "Come to me." You know how you do that? You know where you come to Jesus, and he comes to you...to lift up what burdens you, to give you rest for your soul? In his word, where he says to you, "Take heart, son or daughter, your sins are forgiven." In his supper, where he gives you his body and blood and says, "For you...for forgiveness." In his promises, where he takes your problems and says he'll take care of them, where he daily bears your burdens for you.

So, come. And come often. Let Jesus give you the rest your soul needs. Amen.

