

June 29, 2008
Pentecost 7

"Rest for the Weary in Jesus"

MATTHEW 11:25-30

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 am going to read some familiar words to you. Can you tell me where these words are found? "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me." These words were written by Emma Lazarus and they are embedded in stone at the base of the Statue of Liberty. For over 200 years the United States of America has been offering rest and peace for the huddled masses yearning to be free. Our country has been called the land of opportunity. Immigrants in large numbers still yearn for the blessings of peace and prosperity that our nation provides.

Now listen again to even greater words of freedom, peace and rest, not embedded in stone, but embedded forever on the pages of the Holy Bible. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Jesus offers rest for the weary, a rest and peace that money and friends and freedom cannot offer. The great church father Augustine once said, "O Lord, the soul does not find rest until it finds its rest in you." When you come to your heavenly Father through Jesus you have the peace and rest of knowing you are loved by the true God in this life and for all eternity. I long for more of this peace and rest in my life, and I am sure the same is also true for you as well.

Some don't want this rest

Jesus spoke these words to people who did not want the perfect peace and rest that he had to offer freely and without charge. We are told, "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. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.'" At that time is referring to the time that Jesus warned the people living along the Sea of Galilee that it would be worse for them in the final judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah because they had rejected the true peace and rest that he had to offer as their Savior. Oh, they wanted the peace and rest that comes with prosperity. When Jesus performed miracles such as feeding 5000 people with only five barley loaves and two small fish, they immediately had dreams and ambitions to make Jesus their king who could give them everything they wanted. When he failed to deliver the material prosperity they wanted, they rejected him and walked away.

Jesus praised the heavenly Father for hiding the real blessings of peace and forgiveness from the wise and learned, and revealing them to little children. In Romans 1 we are told that people remain blind to the real blessings the Lord has for them because they stubbornly want to continue in their blindness. "For although they know God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

Have you read the news about the machine on Mars that is taking samples of the soil? There is hope that the white crystals they have observed are ice, the evidence of water, and hopefully a step to discovering life on Mars. Scientists are searching for how life began. The natural human heart loves to reject what the Bible says about the origin of the earth. It also blindly and stubbornly rejects the blessings that Jesus came to offer our world as a free gift.

Jesus praised the heavenly Father for taking the blessings he provides and offering them to little children. He loved the little children. He yearned to take them up in his arms and bless them. He said, "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these." It is truly amazing how God can take the mind of a very intelligent and learned person and give them the faith and trust of a little child. They do not give up their scientific minds and their intelligence. They are born again by water and the spirit. Just as a little baby learns to trust the parents as they hold them close, so the Lord plants a child like faith and trust in people like you and me so we believe his words are true. That's what God wants for all people as Jesus said, "Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."

Listen now to what he says about knowing the Father similar to the way little children know and trust their parents. "All things have been committed to me by my Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." From all eternity Jesus was fully committed to carrying out the plan that had been entrusted to him by the Father. Jesus tells us that no one knows the Father in the way that he knows him and no one knows the Son in the way that our Father knows his only begotten Son. John 1 tells us, "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only ("Only Begotten") who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

Our human minds cannot imagine the love that existed from all eternity between the Father and the Son. The night before he died Jesus prayed, "O Father give me the glory I had with you before the world began." There is a glory and a love between Jesus and Father that goes beyond anything human beings experience in this life. Jesus came to this earth to let us be part of that love and experience a peace and rest that the material things of this life cannot offer.

In his mercy and love God has chosen to reveal this love to you. We are born hating this love. We are born spiritual dead, without hope and without God, opposed to believing that God would open the door of his heart and pour out his love to us by giving us Jesus. We are born thinking stubbornly and foolishly that we have the right and the power to earn this love just as we earn the love of our husbands and wives, friends in the community, and even strangers by showing them kindness and respect. Jesus said to his disciples and to us, "You did not choose me, but I have chosen you." In Acts 16 it says of Lydia, "The Lord opened her heart to believe." Jesus wants this for all people. He made this so clear in the words of John 3:16 when he said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only

begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." What is everlasting life? It is everlasting love that begins right now and lasts forever, a love that was secured for you by Jesus and revealed to you by Jesus. That's the ultimate peace and rest that comes into our lives.

Jesus invites all to come to him

As further prove that Jesus wants all people to find this peace and rest in him and our heavenly Father, listen again to his beautiful invitation. "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." "Come!" Jesus says, "Come to me." He doesn't invite us to seek out other religions as equal paths by which we can get close to our God and experience his love in our lives. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." He says, "Come." His gracious words move and change our hearts, creating in us the trust and the faith of a little child. He invites all people with the words, "weary and burdened." Every one of us is afflicted with the huge burden that we need to measure up to God's law to be fully accepted and loved.

Jesus did not say, "Come to me all you who have it all together, or are doing great, or who are model Christians." The invitation goes out to people like us who share the burden of Paul who wrote in Romans 7 about the restlessness and lack of peace in his life. "For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."

And what does Jesus promise? He promises rest. The Hebrew word for rest is "Sabbath." It says in Genesis that after six days of creation God rested on the seventh day. The Lord God used that day to admire the beauty and the splendor of all the work he had accomplished. He wants people like us to take time and just look at all the blessings he has provided us in our lives. In the book of Hebrews it speaks of an even greater Sabbath rest that we have in Jesus. It says, "Anyone who enters God's rest enters into his work." With these words the Lord calls on us to take the time to sit back and relax and look at the completed work of Christ just as our heavenly Father took the time to look back at the work of creation that he created in our behalf.

Jesus even invites us, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...My yoke is easy and my burden is light." The rest you have in Jesus is a wonderful rest, but it is also a burden. The world says, "Find you peace and rest in the pleasures of this life or in your relationships with other people or even in yourself." Jesus is nothing. He is a crutch. He is worthless. That is a burden we need to carry. Jesus said that the world will hate us just as it hated him. It is a burden. It is a yoke that is placed on our shoulders.

What comes to you mind when you hear the word "Yoke." Don't think of the word "yolk" for the yolk of an egg. Think of a large wooden beam placed over two oxen. They pull a plow or a large wagon together at the same time. Years ago a man with an old Ford truck was stuck on a muddy road. He asked the local farmer if he had a tractor to pull out the car. "No" said the man, but I do have my old blind mule Henry. The man wondered how one blind mule could pull his truck out of the mud. The farmer shouted. "Go Henry." Nothing happened. Then he shouted again. "Go Henry. Go Jake. Go Irma." The mule lounged

forward and pulled out the truck, because he thought he was pulling with two other mules, Jake and Irma.

Jesus says "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Look at who is yoked with you. You are not alone. The Jesus who gives you peace and rest also promises to be with you throughout your life and help you with whatever load you carry. Amen.