

MATTHEW 11 : 28 - 30
EVERYONE NEEDS REST

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

How well-rested are you this morning? After a long hard week, after a long hard yesterday, are you feeling the effects? It may take more than one night to get re-charged. Or were you awake for much of the night with pain? With “bathroom calls”? With the children? With nervous legs? Or maybe you just couldn’t get your brain to shut down. Definitely, everyone needs rest. By the end of today, you’ll need to pause for rest again. Rest. However, the “rest” that Jesus is talking about in this text is not just rest for the body. He says, *And you will find rest for your souls.* Jesus is talking about the peace and rest that soothes the heart and the soul, the comfort and relief that soothes the conscience. Do you have rest when you have a guilty conscience? If you broke your mother’s dish, your father’s tool, dented your neighbor’s car, or took something from the store, from a neighbor, from a business, or from the state and federal government, how much rest of conscience do you have? If you made fun of a family member or friend, because it was good for some public laughs, but was hurtful to them; how do you feel? If you “told somebody off” and humiliated them in anger, are you plagued with regrets? If you have gone places you shouldn’t have gone, followed desires you shouldn’t have followed—and you know that someone else is going to find out about it, plus God already knows about it—do you churn with heavy second thoughts? How much “rest” for your heart, soul, and conscience is there? Maybe you try to ignore it, forget it, explain it away—at least to yourself, maybe to others—or just plain deny it, but it’s still there—like pulling a nail out of a board, and the hole is still there—how do you feel?

Jesus gives rest. 1) He provides rest for your body—from fatigue, sickness, ailments. He designed the human body with a natural sleep cycle each day, with its miraculous ability to heal and recuperate, and He also provides the gift of medicine. 2) Jesus provides rest for stressed out or injured minds, for minds beset with worry, for minds intimidated and overwhelmed with fear. He provides medicines for ailments of the mind as well as the body. 3) But above all, Jesus provides mercy and forgiveness for hearts toiling with guilt—powerful imaginary guilt and powerful real guilt for sins committed whether in weakness, in ignorance, or in deliberate and willful actions—all sins by which you are “dead to rights” and without hope. Yet in Jesus there is rest and forgiveness for every sin. He has already served your sentence before God, suffered your payback, died the death that you should die; AND He has, in His holiness and righteousness, returned from the grave in power and in victory. In Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself, you have fresh life and a clean slate at no cost to you! In Jesus you have rest and forgiveness for everything!

Do you want real-life examples? Look at the preceding three chapters of Matthew—8, 9, and 10. Jesus healed a man with dreaded leprosy (maybe we could substitute “cancer”). He healed the paralyzed servant of Roman soldier without even going to the house. He healed Peter’s mother-in-law from a fever, He healed demon possessed people—some with physical evidence of demon possession—deafness, crippling—and some with mental evidence of demon possession—(which is not to say that every physical ailment or psychological ailment is demon possession). He calmed the wind, the waves, and the terrified hearts of the disciples when in a boat in a storm, He comforted a paralyzed man assuring him his sins were forgiven and then healed his paralysis. He sought out Matthew the tax-collector to be one of His disciples. He brought back to life Jairus’s twelve year old daughter. He healed the blind and the mute. When He saw multitudes of people coming to Him, He described them as sheep without a shepherd. To the disciples He said that God, who cares even for the sparrows, would also care for them. That’s only from three chapters! Did you find yourself in that long list of real-life examples of Jesus providing Rest to people in need? Jesus brings Rest for you--healing and recuperation for your hurting body, soothing and calm for your distressed mind, and—Number One—forgiveness for your sin-burdened soul. *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Jesus extends His precious invitation, “Come!” His invitation of love brings initiates your response--like saying to a toddler, “Come!” and he responds. Jesus’ loving call initiates your willing response. If He did not invite you with His open arms and open heart of love and warmth, you a sinner would not on your own taker steps to Him who is God! Sinners on their own have no desire to approach the holiness of God. You cannot tell a

sinner to “accept Jesus,” to “make a decision” for Christ. It is God’s love and His invitation that invite your trust and faith in Him. He takes the initiative, we respond—induced by His powerful love. (Remember, however, a sinner does have the power to say, “No! Not interested! See ya.”) ---- Come to “Me,” Jesus says. Remember all the real people from Matthew 8,9, and 10? Jesus gave Rest to them. Jesus invites YOU also.

What about Advent 2023. What sort of rest do you need in the next three weeks? Is your schedule full and then some? Is it because the family has always done X, Y and Z; plus now there are new things—A, B, and C—to say nothing of the sports schedule? Plus families live at far distances, and many hours of travel are spent. Is your schedule full? Do you need Rest? To celebrate you do not “have to” do all the outward things. How many are done for self, because YOU want—to have the best decorations, to give the best presents, to be the best host/hostess? ---- All things added to the schedule, mean something has to be cut. Easily the first things to cut, are those which emphasize the arrival of your Savior with your spiritual Rest in Him. Focus Christmas on Jesus!

What other sort of rest do you need in the next three weeks? Are you weak, or ill, or frail? Are you lacking the money for the presents you once gave? Are you worried that the family won’t get together? that you will be alone, or alone even in a room full of people? Are you concerned that Christmas won’t be white? Are you fearful that death may darken the doorstep of your family? Are you worried that you will have a lousy Christmas? ---- But Christmas is not about physical things, or health, or outward happiness. It’s not about glee for children. It’s about the Son of God and Savior coming for you. That is the one thing that gives real REST at Christmas.

What other sort of Rest do you need the next three weeks? Do you need peace and cohesion in your family? Are you pitted against your brother or sister, vying to be on top—whether you are fifteen or fifty? Are you on the outs with your parent or child—maybe not even on speaking terms? Are you at odds with your husband or wife, just mechanically making the best of it, but your hearts are pulling opposite directions? No rest here. Are you backing away or running away from God, because you think He’s done you dirt, because you think you know more than He, or because you don’t need anybody telling you anything? Christmas won’t be much, with these sort of unresolved problems. One needs to sit up, also (and this doesn’t sound very nice) to shut up, and finally to open up. One needs honestly to sit up and assess self on the basis of the Bible. What sort of individual are you really? Realize you are not God’s gift to the world or to your family, like you think you are. Sit up to assess yourself, then “shut-up”—stop making excuses for yourself, coming up with exceptions for yourself, and assigning all—or most—of the fault to the other. Each needs to assess self before God, to admit there is no defense out of your mouth, and cling to Jesus for forgiveness, the Jesus who by His death and resurrection for you has already invited you saying, *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden—under sin’s load--and I will give you rest.* Forgiveness from Him! Then both of you need to open up. Putting pride aside, sit down with the other, and patiently and honestly listening to what they say, and patiently and honestly respond. Both need to turn to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness. In Him there is refreshing love, forgiveness, and rest. Then both share that same forgiveness one with the other, be it brother, sister, parent, child, spouse. Such Rest in Jesus, provides rest and peace at the celebration of at Christmas—His arrival on earth.

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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Indeed, the Good News at Christmas fills you with a special joy—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men!” God’s good will to men! To build Christmas on Jesus is not a burden. In fact it’s so easy that our human pride deems it hard—because it’s not built on self! Jesus says, “Be *yoked* with Me at Christmas.) If someone here isn’t clear, the word “yoke” is not the word “yolk” which is the yellow of an egg. A “yoke” was the device used to hitch, to hook, two animals—two oxen, two horses—into a team, so that together they could pull a wagon or a plow, etc. To be yoked with Jesus is easy because He’s doing all the pulling! You just walk along. What joy! And if two of you are on the other side of Jesus squabbling, there’s just no peace there.

In Jesus you have peace and rest with God in heaven. In Jesus have rest and peace with one another at Christmas time. In Jesus celebrate His birth and Rest for you, no matter what your physical circumstances are. In Him you have REST!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---