

Sermon for July 9, 2023 - 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 11:25-30 EHV

Theme: Come to Christ for rest

- 1) Only he has the power to relieve you.
- 2) His promises make everything bearable.

²⁵At 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. ²⁶Yes, Father, because this was pleasing to you. ²⁷Everything 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. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Do you feel burdened? Maybe inflation is stressing you out. As housing, food, and energy prices remain high, you wonder how to provide for your family. Or perhaps you feel the burden of growing old: your body aches more, and you can't think as swiftly or clearly as in the past. The people you grew up with are dying, and your children are so busy with their lives that you constantly feel alone. Perhaps you are younger and feel the burden of growing into an adult. You think and feel differently and don't always understand why or how to control your emotions. Perhaps you feel pressure to conform to our society's new morality that not only encourages us to accept but also celebrate things that God's Word calls wrong. Perhaps you are burdened by a physical ailment or mental condition that prevents you from living a normal life. Maybe Satan himself is plaguing you with temptations to sin and doubt – burdening you with spiritual anxiety.

Even though we all have different burdens in life, we all share the greatest: a lifetime of sin weighing on our consciences. We know God is holy and condemns sin but try as we might, we can never attain the perfection God demands. Only one sin separates us from Him, and we carry the unbearable burden of a lifetime's worth. How can we ever face him with such a record? Won't he condemn us on the spot? We try to hide the truth about ourselves from both God and us. We put on a cheery face and talk about the good things God wants us to talk about, all the while trying to cover up the mess of our lives.

But Jesus knows about the mess. He sees the struggles, fear, guilt, and shame burdening your heart. He understands that, instead of helping you, worldly wisdom only accomplishes making you worse off than before. Yes, Jesus knows all, and his heart goes out to you – asking you to ignore all worldly philosophers and self-help gurus who tell you to do this, that, and the other thing to find spiritual peace. Instead, he invites you to come to him like a little child running to a loving daddy who will make all things right. He invites you to bring all your proverbial baggage and set it before him. Why? Because only he has the authority and ability to help you – which he lovingly promises to do.

Part One: Come to Christ for rest. Only he has the power to relieve you.

Jesus prayed: *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.*

Many voices in the world claim to know God, but there is only one who does: Jesus. Why? Because he is the only begotten Son of God the Father – one with him in essence. He became human for our sake. Why? To be the atoning sacrifice for our sin,ⁱ as the Bible says: *God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.*ⁱⁱ Jesus is *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*ⁱⁱⁱ And he most certainly paid for all your sins in full. How can you be sure? Because Jesus declared it from the cross when he said: *It is finished!*^{iv} On top of that, Jesus rose from the dead – proving that His Father accepted his sacrifice for us. Yes, because Jesus willingly saved us in accordance with His Father’s will, *God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,* ¹⁰*so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹*and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*^v

Jesus has the authority and desire to relieve your greatest burden by forgiving all your sins. It is only in Jesus that you come to know God. It is only through Jesus that God’s fatherly love for you is revealed. And when you lay all your burdens before Jesus in sincere, child-like repentance and faith, you find rest. What kind of rest? First and foremost, the rest of being reconciled to God. You see, God no longer holds you accountable for your sins as you look to Jesus in faith. Why? Because He paid for them in full. God has adopted you as his dearly loved son or daughter through Baptism. Heaven’s doors stand wide open to you. Your resurrection to everlasting life with God is guaranteed, and oh, what hope and peace these truths give us!

Part Two: Come to Christ for rest. His promises make everything bearable.

And the spiritual rest Jesus gives us through faith helps us bear our earthly burdens. How so? Consider Jesus’ words:

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.”*

Do you know what a yoke is? Some of you might be familiar with the wooden yoke placed on one or more animals to bind them to a load that needs to be pulled. But many cultures also have a wooden yoke for humans that you place over your shoulders. When you balance a burden on both sides of the yoke, it becomes easier to carry. Heavy buckets of water, for example, are easier to carry on a yoke than with your hands.

The yoke Jesus encourages us to take up is the yoke of trusting in His promises. And that trust makes all the other burdens we carry so much lighter. How so? Because as we study the Bible and learn who Jesus is and what he does for us, we find the strength to persevere through every earthly affliction with all patience. You see, the LORD never promised us an easy, burden-free life. No, what he has promised, however, is strength and help to bear our burdens as we keep our eyes focused on Him.

“But,” someone might ask, “how does trusting in Jesus for salvation help me with my financial worry?” It helps you because you can take God’s promise in the Bible to heart: *I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you.*^{vi} You can trust Jesus, who says: ³¹“So do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’”³²*For the unbelievers chase after all these things. Certainly, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* ³³*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*^{vii}

Another person might ask: How does my trust in Jesus help me as I grow old and my mind and body fail? It helps by pointing you to Jesus’ promise to grant you a glorified body to be given at the resurrection on the last day.^{viii} As you see your Christian friends and family members die, you can know that each funeral is not a goodbye but a “see you later.” Because of God’s promises, you can understand that – as restricted as your life might feel – your time left on this earth is not in vain.^{ix} Even though you might not know what your purpose is on this earth, you can be confident that God does – and that he is using you to accomplish his will. And, when your last hour comes, you can fall asleep in the peace of knowing that you will wake up with your Saviour in paradise.^x

“What about me,” a teen might wonder. “How does faith in Jesus help me with all the struggles I feel inside and out – struggles with my identity and purpose in life?” Because you can take to heart the LORD’s promise in the Bible: *“But now this is what the LORD says, the LORD who created you..., the LORD who formed you... Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.”*^{xi} In other words, Jesus knows your identity and purpose, which he will reveal to you as you look to him and His Word in faith.

“But how does faith in Jesus help as I feel pressure from friends, teachers, colleagues, and the media to conform to our society’s new morality?” By reminding you of God’s promise: *the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.*^{xii} Jesus tells his followers: *“To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but it has not been given to them.”*^{xiii}

All the burdens you face in life - the loss of friends, feeling of abandonment, anxiety, depression, and spiritual anguish - become bearable when you take up the yoke of Christ. Why? Because he promises you: *Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be overwhelmed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*^{xiv} On top of that, he promises to relieve you of all these burdens forever when he visibly comes again on the last day. He will usher you into his everlasting paradise, wipe every tear from your eye, and have you live with him as his dearly loved child forever. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain because the former things will have passed away.^{xv}

All these promises of Jesus make our burdens easier to carry. While it is true that they might seem unbearably heavy at times, Jesus calls us to remember his promise to come to him for relief. Through His Word and Sacraments, he gently and lovingly salves our spiritual wounds, wipes away our tears, and encourages us with the certainty of our salvation in him. As we take up these promises through repentance and faith, we find relief and rest – confessing with the apostle Paul: *I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.*^{xvi}

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: your earthly burdens are heavy – wearing you out if you carry them alone. Therefore, listen to Jesus’ call to come to him for rest. Repentantly lay all your burdens before Him in reverent prayer and receive everlasting rest for your soul. His love and faithfulness will refresh you as His forgiveness lifts away the spiritual guilt and shame weighing you down. More than that, He will offer the yoke of faith that connects you to him. He will help to bear every other earthly burden until the day comes when He will call you home to Himself in heaven. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. 1 John 2:2

ⁱⁱ 2 Corinthians 5:21 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ John 1:29 EHV

^{iv} John 19:30 EHV

^v Philippians 2:9-11 EHV

^{vi} Hebrews 13:5 EHV

^{vii} Matthew 6:31-33 EHV

^{viii} Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:35-54

^{ix} Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58 & Philippians 1:18-26

^x Cf. Luke 23:42-43

^{xi} Isaiah 43:1 EHV

^{xii} 1 Corinthians 1:18 EHV

^{xiii} Matthew 13:11 EHV

^{xiv} Isaiah 41:10 EHV

^{xv} Cf. Revelation 21:3-7

^{xvi} Romans 8:18 EHV