

Matthew 11:25-30

Are you planning to take a **vacation** this summer? Maybe you've taken one **already**. Ellen and I are planning to be gone, for the next 2 weeks. Most of **our** vacations revolve around seeing **family**, and this one is no exception. But what kind of vacations do **you** like to take? **Some** people like to take vacations that are filled with **activity** from start to finish. They get up **early** in the morning and head from one attraction to the next all day long. Then they go to bed for a good night's sleep, get up the **next** morning, and go through the same process all **over** again. The purpose of **that** kind of vacation is to pack in all the **fun** and **excitement** you can. But **other** people like their vacations to be much more **laid back** and **easy going**. They might go to a **campground**, or to a **cabin** on a lake. They get up whenever they **feel** like it. Then they spend their time **reading**, or **fishing**, or just doing **nothing** in particular. The purpose of **that** kind of vacation is simply to **relax**. In **either** case, the ultimate **goal** of a vacation is to get **away** from the everyday **routine** of life. And no matter how you look at it, that's not a **bad** goal.

In part, that's the way God **created** us to be. He created us with a need to **take a break** on a regular basis. In fact, in the Old Testament, God even **commanded** His people to take a break for **one whole day** every week. He called it the **Sabbath** day, or the day of **rest**. That **Sabbath** day served a good **purpose** - the purpose of getting people to **slow down** at least once a week, and get some **rest**. It **also** served the purpose of teaching the people a lesson about **God Himself**. Just as He gave them this day of rest for their **bodies**, He was also the one who could give them rest for their **souls**. It's a lesson **we** need to **learn** and take to **heart** as well. Our souls **need** rest. And in our text for today, Jesus tells us how we can **Enjoy God's Rest** for our souls.

What exactly do we **mean** when we use the phrase "rest for the **soul**?" In the verses just **before** our text, Jesus described three groups of people who had **no rest** for their souls. Jesus said, "*Woe to you, **Chorazin!** Woe to you, **Bethsaida!** For if the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. You, **Capernaum**, will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will go down to hell. For if the miracles performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.*" The people in those 3 cities - Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum - were headed for a terrible **judgment**. Why? Because even though Jesus had **lived** and **walked** among them, and even though

Jesus had even performed **miracles** among them, they still refused to **believe** in Him as their **Savior**.

Those people had **deluded** themselves into thinking that they didn't **need** the **rest** which Jesus offered. They thought they could find it on their **own**. So they relied on **their** good works and on **their** traditions to try to give them **comfort** and **rest**. That's what their earthly wisdom **told** them to do, and that's exactly the **point** Jesus is making at the beginning of our text when He said, "*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have **hidden** these things from **clever** and **learned** people.*" The simple truth of the Gospel is **hidden** to those who think they are too **wise** or too **learned** for it - people who think they can do just fine on their **own, without** Jesus.

But the **truth** is that without **Jesus**, their souls will **never** be at rest. Their souls will be doomed to **destruction**. That's how every soul comes **into** this world - **doomed** to destruction. Why? It's because of **sin**. By **nature**, people understand that there is a God who demands **perfection** from them, and they also realize that they have **not** been **perfect**. The result is **unrest** for the soul. We **know** what that's like. We've **felt** our conscience telling us that something isn't **right** when we've **said** things we shouldn't **say**, or **done** things we shouldn't **do**. So how do we **deal** with that? How are we going to be able to go to **sleep** at night and not think, "My soul is **doomed**?" How are we going to find **rest** for our souls?

Man, in his wisdom, has tried to come up with many different **solutions** to this problem - different ways to find **rest** for himself. Maybe you've tried some of these solutions **yourself**. Some people will try to **ignore** the situation. They keep telling themselves that nothing is really **wrong**. Over time, they keep **dulling** their conscience to the point where it doesn't even **bother** them anymore. However, eventually they reach a point where they are no longer **able** to just ignore the problem. Maybe that's what's happening **now**. People are faced with a potentially **life-threatening** virus. So, they need to do some **soul** searching to determine how they're going to **react**. They realize that they can't get out of this situation on their **own**, and as a result, there is **no rest** for their soul.

If people aren't able to **ignore** sin they try to find their rest in some **other** way. Some will play the **comparison** game: "Well, I know I'm not **perfect**, but at least I'm not as bad as **that** guy." Still others will play the "I'm doing the **best I can**" game. They think that God can't be **mad** at them, because they're **trying** to be the best people they can be. Those kinds of **games** might ease people's consciences for a **short** time, but **none** of them can bring the **lasting rest** which we

all **need**. The **only** way to find rest for a sinful soul is to have the sin removed **completely**, and that's **not** something that **we** can do. But it is exactly what **Jesus** came to do **for** us.

That's why Jesus gives us this simple message, "*Come to me.*" If we want to find **rest** for our souls we need to go to **Jesus**. It's so **simple**. Yet so many people don't want to **see** it. Sometimes, you and I get **distracted** and we **forget** that simple truth ourselves. That's why we need to be **reminded**. We need to hear Jesus' words **again** and **again**, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" Have you felt the **weariness** of trying to make up for your sins and imperfections on your **own**? Do you have a burden of **guilt** weighing down on your shoulders? Then go to **Jesus**, because that's why He **came**. Jesus will **give** us the rest we so desperately need.

I read a story once about a man who was driving an **oxcart** into a little village. Along the way he met an old man who was carrying a **heavy load** on his shoulders all by himself. The driver had **compassion** on the old man, and he invited him to ride along on the **back** of his cart. A short time later, the driver turned around to see how the old man was **doing**, but he was surprised to see that the man wasn't sitting on his cart. Instead, he had chosen to keep on **straining on his own** under the heavy weight of his burden.

Sometimes that's the way **we** act too. Jesus lived a perfect life, and then freely offered that perfect life to the heavenly Father in order to **remove** all **sin** from our lives - the very **same** sins which caused all of our **weariness** and **burdens**. That selfless sacrifice took place some 2,000 years ago. The **burden** caused by sin has been **carried**, and it's no longer a **burden** for **us** at all. So why do we go around still trying to **carry** that burden in our lives? Take the burden of your sin to the **cross** of **Jesus**. Lay those burdens **down** at the foot of the cross, and realize that **Jesus** has already **carried** them. Jesus has provided us with the **rest** we need, so **Enjoy God's Rest**.

Jesus said, "*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.*" The **yoke** that Jesus offers us is our Christian **life** - a life which includes both **joys** and **sadness** - a life which includes both **sickness** and **health** - a life which includes both **life** and **death**. No matter **what** Jesus allows to come into our lives, we need to be **yoked together** with Him, and **humbly** walk along through life with **Him** at our side. When we realize that Jesus has taken away all of our **sins** and their **punishment**, then following God's commands is no longer a heavy **burden**, it's a **delight**.

Living our lives for our **Savior** is the way we can express our **thanks** and **love** for everything **He** has done for **us**. Even our **crosses** aren't really a **burden**, but rather they become a **joy** as we learn to **appreciate** what our **Savior** suffered for **us**, and when we **realize** that God will **use** these crosses to **bless** us. All along the way, our Savior will give us the **strength** and **endurance** we need to **carry** whatever yoke He places on us. That's why He can say, "*My yoke is **easy** and my burden is **light**.*"

The **rest** we possess because of **Jesus** completely **replaces** whatever **stresses** and **burdens** we experience in our daily lives. And most important of all, we know that our **biggest** burden - the burden of **sin** - is a burden that **we** don't have to **carry**, because **Jesus** has already carried it **for** us. **Enjoy God's Rest.** Enjoy it by taking a break every week to worship our **God** and to study His **Word**, to **pray** to Him and to **praise** Him for His goodness. **We need** those breaks on a regular basis, and every time we go to **Jesus**, we will find a little **taste** of **heaven** - that place where we will rest **completely** from all our labors and burdens. That's a rest we will enjoy **forever**, and it's the kind of rest that Jesus offers us **continually** in His Word and Sacraments. **Enjoy God's Rest.** Amen.