

Matthew 11:25-30
Pentecost 6; July 9 & 10, 2023

For one summer I worked a job in a factory while in school. For a number of years before that, I worked for the Public Works Department in Brown Deer. I was part of the summer crew that would be hired to cut grass, help with laying asphalt, and a whole bunch of other things. It was a good job. It was outside all day long. Once you got in there for a summer, you were pretty certain you would get hired for the summer the following year. But one summer, I had gotten a chance to work in a small factory making parts for mostly outboard motors. It paid more than I had gotten from the Village of Brown Deer. And so, I thought, let's try this for a year.

So, you would come to work sit in front of a punch machine the entire day. I would take one metal part from a crate, place it in the machine, let the machine stamp it, take it out, and put it into another crate. For hours, you would sit there and push a button again, and again, and again for eight to ten hours a day. There is nothing wrong with do that. A person could make a good living by doing that. But for me, it was hard to just sit there. When you finish a large crate/basket, there was always another one to take its place. You would get moved around the factory to different machines, but it was pretty much the same thing every day.

After a few weeks, I soon realized that I might not have made the best decision to give up my job at the Public Works Department and the chance of being outside almost every day. I called up the village president and asked if my old job was still available for the summer. Unfortunately, it was not. Since I chose to not come back, the spot had been filled. It had been my decision to make, and I was going to have to deal with the consequences of that decision. It was a long summer that year.

Sometimes, the hardships of life seem to never come to an end. We look at where we are and where we want to end up and it just seems like it will be impossible to get there. As we carry the baggage of our life around, there just doesn't seem to be an end in sight. We look at what we have done in life and where God would like us to be, we see ourselves falling short. It doesn't take long to feel like you are just not good enough to be a child of God. So, what do we do to get rid of those burdens? We try even harder and there seems to be no end in sight.

A few years ago, Nancy and I went hiking out in Glacier National Park. It was about a 11-12-mile hike. We thought we could do it. The first 7-8 miles or so, had only an elevation gain about 800 feet. That meant a total elevation gain of 800 feet from beginning to end. It didn't include all the ups and downs you would go through the whole hike. As you went around every corner of the trail, you looked to see if the lodge that we were heading to would be in sight. Finally, we saw it off in the distance, but had several miles to go yet. We pushed on and we finally made it. We had gone through all the water we had brought along. But we were able to get more there. After we rested for a while, we began the trek back down. The return trip was downhill – 2200 ft. down for about 4 miles. However, much of the hike was out in the direct sun, since a large portion of the hike went through woods that had been burned out before. We drank everything we had brought along. I finally drank water from a small stream, not knowing if it was good or not. Nancy didn't want to drink it, but she was getting closer to heat stroke. We did finally make it down. We were so tired and thirsty that we just needed rest. We were probably just a little over our heads for that hike.

Jesus knows how much we need rest. He looked at the people of his day and he could see how much they needed rest. The Pharisees taught that the way you would be able to find rest for your soul, was to do more. They heaped the burden of commands on God's people. Instead of just 10 commandments, they had turned them into 613. They had turned God's gift of rest into a burdensome set of rules. The more you tried to get rest by keeping commands, the more tired the people got. Their yoke got heavier and heavier. That's why these words of Jesus were so important for them and us to hear. **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."**

In Psalm 62, which we sang today, David knew where true rest came from. It didn't come from him. He had tried that after he had an affair and tried to cover it up with violence. It didn't work. David wrote these words: **"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress; I will not be shaken."** (Ps. 62:5-6)

That's why Jesus always had an eye out for the weak, the needy, the left-behind, the forgotten, the weary and heavy-laden people. He came to take off of you that yoke of guilt, or hurt, disappointments, sin that you have piled on our backs. He knows that if we try to get right with God by obeying the law, we are going to fail. It doesn't work. So, he says: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** Did you catch it? Did you catch the word that make all the difference in the world? It's the word: **"ALL."** Jesus' invitation doesn't exclude anyone.

He came to take that heavy yoke of sin off our back, and give us his light yoke to carry. **"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."** You see, if that heavy yoke of guilt and sin is not removed, it will crush you. That's why Jesus came into this world. He invites you to bring your fears, your inadequacies, your failures, your guilt and your sin and let him carry it for you. That's what he carried to the cross. You can't carry it. I can't carry it. Jesus can and he did. Instead, he invites us to take his yoke. A yoke is a device that would guide and steer an animal. Jesus gives us his promises. He removes our sin and our guilt. He guides and directs us till the day he brings us to heaven.

Are we good enough to get to heaven? The answer is: "No." Noone is. But Jesus is. In Him, we have perfect rest. Trust those words of Jesus - **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** That's all we need. Amen.