

“Come to Me”

Isaiah 55:1-3a; Matthew 11:28-30 – Tesa Hauser
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – May 1, 2022

Holy God, bless the speaking and the hearing of these words may we remember that in you we can find rest, and the strength to keep doing the work you have called us to. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In your list of priorities this past week, was rest on that list at all? If so, was it top three, or even number one? I'm going to guess that, for many of us, it wasn't on the list at all. It wasn't on my calendar or in my planner. It seems a little ridiculous to schedule out rest. We rest when we are tired, or we rest when we sleep. However, the rest I am talking about includes active acknowledgement of where we are mentally, physically, and even spiritually.

It seems counterintuitive to plan out our rest or if we should rest, but in doing so, we realize what we *actually* need and how we are *actually* doing. We can keep going without realizing that we need time to stop or set aside the burdens we have decided to carry and those placed upon us. For some of us, rest seems like an impossible task. There is too much to do and not enough time to do it. Others don't see the point in rest or its benefits. For some, we don't think we deserve to rest, for whatever reason. Rest is tricky, I acknowledge. Society also places value on being busy or the busiest. The busier you are, the more successful you are, and the more you are worth. However, we know we find our identity and worth in the God who provides an abundance of grace, everlasting love, redemption, and rest.

The passage in Matthew shows that God cares about rest. This passage sort of interrupts the section, but in a way that fits in describing who God is, revealed through Jesus. It begins with a command, “Come to me!” It’s a sort of “drop everything that you’re doing and come over to me right now” moment. You make haste at hearing these words. It’s funny when you think about it, asking people who are exhausted to hurry, but it’s for a good reason.

This section begins with the rest part. Jesus says, for a second, let go of the heaviness you are carrying and just be with me. Before the “lesson,” before the teaching, before anything else, come and rest. This rest is not just taking a break from working but a refresh. Jesus says I want you to rest so that you can find renewed strength, renewed energy, not just for your body but also for your soul. It’s an all-encompassing rejuvenation, from the inside out, outside in, head to toe. You were living at less than 100% capacity, and I want to help you get back to 100% or close to it. Jesus says we deserve to rest.

There is still work to do, but Jesus doesn’t want you to do this work alone. He says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.” There is a quote from the writings of the Jesuit Cardinal, Robert Bellarmine, who asks the question we are all wondering, “And what is this yoke of yours that does not weary but gives rest? It is, of course, that first and greatest commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” What is easier, sweeter, more pleasant, than to love

goodness, beauty, and love, the fullness of which you are, O Lord, my God?” This is a joyful revelation! What is coupled with the greatest commandment according to Jesus? “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.¹” The work Jesus has for us to love God, and to love others, but it isn’t placed upon us, and then we are left to do it all alone; there is this secondary idea of the yoke. Another joyful revelation!

As many of you know, a yoke is a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals so they can work as a team, so it distributes the weight to make it easier. Jesus is offering to help us; he is offering to provide rest and help when it does get hard. Jesus has said, I will teach you how to do this work, as an experienced ox would teach a younger ox. This is also true of the community and body of Christ. Sometimes we have the resources and energy, and sometimes we don’t. Sometimes we need to ask our neighbor for help, or saying I need to take a break, or can you remind me to rest.

The yoke helps us to do God’s work in the world. Nevertheless, the work isn’t meant to burden us since we are meant to do it together, with God’s help. And for whatever reason, when it becomes hard, when it becomes too heavy to carry, Jesus says, come to me and rest, and be reminded that, “for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

¹ Matthew 22:35-40

Today is Stewardship Sunday, and next week is Consecration Sunday, where we will turn in our Estimate of Giving cards so that those creating the budget can prepare for the next budget year. So, on this Stewardship Sunday, what does money have to do with rest? It is also tricky to talk about, like rest. Money can be one of those burdens Jesus talks about; money is stressful and occupies our thoughts and time. It is another thing that society places value on and says we should find our identity in, and I get it money can provide access and opportunities. Talking about money is awkward and not easy, but it is a part of the life of the Church and the local congregation.

In being open and honest about money, we see what God is doing in our lives and congregation. Money is needed to keep the lights on, to buy food for Welcome Saturday, to provide the salary for your pastor and your ministerial assistant. For that, I am so thankful, and I am also thankful for those who faithfully give their money and their time here at Vista La Mesa. The work we do is possible by the many hands and minds that faithfully who, as the stewardship glossary in the letters sent out last week mentions, open themselves to God's guidance and direction for their lives with their resources.

In the reading from Isaiah, we see this invitation to come to God again. And once again, you don't need to bring anything other than yourself to be nourished and refreshed. Isaiah points out something that Jesus mentions; you can let go of

those things that do not satisfy you, even if outside forces are saying you need to hold on. The alternative is not simply a life of ease. It's asking to give up pretending like you don't need rest, like you don't need help, like you don't need to be refreshed and nourished. Like what you bring doesn't matter.

God is a provider, but I won't pretend that following God is easy and that all of a sudden you won't have any worries about rest, work, or money. In being a faithful steward, you acknowledge what you do have and what you can give, of your money, of your time, of your energy towards the work of the gospel. Know you are still practicing stewardship, if you can only give \$5 or 5 minutes of your time, it all counts.

In these passages, God asks that we open ourselves to what God is doing in the world. Through Jesus, God asks that we are open to the possibility of rest and of help. God asks that we are open to the possibility of learning from Jesus, who loved God and loved others well. Jesus asks that we are open to being refreshed, renewed, and satisfied in God, who deeply cares for us. Jesus asks that we are open to working together in ministry and being there for one another when the load gets too heavy. So I ask that you open yourself up to what you think God is asking you to do with your money, your time, and your talents. As we prepare to provide our Estimate of Giving cards next week, prayerfully consider what God is calling you to be open to, and know that when the call gets tough, because it will, that God will

provide help and rest. Give what you can with an open, joyful heart. Alleluia and
Amen.