

Finding Rest in Him

Matthew 11:25-30

Introduction

What does it mean to “labor and be heavy laden”? St. Paul summed it up for us today: *For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:15, 24)*. We labor and become weary when we struggle with the Old Man, our sinful nature. We realize we are trapped in a body of death. One possibility would be to give in to the Old Man. But Paul has done away with that option in **Chapter 6**: *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* So, what is the answer? Who will deliver us? The answer is in the Gospel lesson today: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28)*.

Jesus Is Our Sabbath

We Need Rest

At **Creation**, God worked for six days and rested on the seventh. One day out of the week, man is supposed to rest, following God’s example. This was called The **Sabbath** day. But it was more than just a day to refrain from work. It was a **holy** day (Read **Genesis 2:1-3**). It is a day we devote to God. While we may get rest from work for our bodies, the emphasis is finding rest for our souls in God. Our bodies and our souls require rest.

The Sabbath Today

While we still require the day of rest, we don’t have to follow the ceremonial part of the **Sabbath** law, nor do we follow the other **OLD TESTAMENT** holy days. (Read **Colossians 2:16-17**). **Christ** is our **Sabbath**. We **FIND OUR REST IN HIM**.

The Call Is for All

Have you ever wondered to whom Jesus was talking here? According to **CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA**: *Jesus called everyone, not only the people of Israel. As the Maker and Lord of all, He spoke to the weary Jews who did not have the strength to bear the yoke of the law. He spoke to idolaters heavy laden and oppressed by the devil and weighed down by the multitude of their sins.*

Jesus Calls the Jews, burdened by the law

The Jews had the **law**. It showed them how to live. But it also showed them their **shortcomings**. They could never measure up to the law. So, they had to make sacrifices continually. I have been told that throughout the day, there was always something being sacrificed on the altar in the temple. Jesus was calling them to be set free from this bondage to the law.

Jesus calls idolaters, burdened by sin

Others were enslaved to another kind of religious practice. They were enslaved to the worship of false gods. Jesus was calling them to be free from this bondage as well.

Jesus calls us, burdened by sin, guilt, and shame.

We are bound and burdened by sin, guilt, and shame. This is what weighs us down. The cares of this life are all a result of the sin in our lives and in the world. Jesus calls us to be freed from this bondage.

How We Come to Jesus

Confession & Absolution

How do we come to Jesus to receive this rest and freedom? One way is through **Confession and Absolution (Repentance)**. In the **Apology, ARTICLE XIII**, on **REPENTANCE** we read: *The “labor” and the “burden” signify the contrition, anxiety and terrors of sin and death. To “come to” Christ is to believe that sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. When we believe, our hearts are brought to life by the Holy Spirit through Christ’s Word. Here, therefore, are the two chief parts [of repentance]: contrition and faith.*

The Lord’s Supper

Another way to receive this rest is when we come to the **Table** to receive the **Lord’s Supper**. The **Explanation of the Small Catechism** teaches that we are to receive **Communion** often because *His words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins” promise and offer us great blessings.* The blessings are forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation—rest.

Barriers

Sometimes we may not feel worthy to receive these blessings. But we read in the **Formula of Concord—Solid Declaration** in **ARTICLE VII, THE HOLY SUPPER**: *Some Christians...think that in their great impurity they are not worthy of this precious treasure and Christ’s benefits. ... These are truly worthy guests for whom this highly venerable Sacrament has been especially instituted and appointed.* If you don’t feel worthy, you are the one this was meant for.

Means of Grace

Are you weary and heavy laden from the burden of sin? Come to the Table today and **FIND REST IN HIM**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
