

Come to Me and Rest

This week, this year, has been challenging for many of us, and I believe that the Holy Spirit wants me to remind you that Jesus, our Savior and High Priest, understands and is full of compassion and love for His people right here in Copperas Cove. This week, God has again reminded me that it is only in Him that we find rest and peace.

We would love to live in a world where everything is predictable, a low-stress environment, and one that is filled with peace and happiness. We would love to have smooth sailing and “live happily ever after” like the fairytales say. AI says that “happily ever after” is usually reserved for the defeat of an evil villain and the triumph of true love. And, there is truth in that! The enemy of our souls will ultimately be defeated by our Lord Jesus who loves us so much that He laid down His life for us that we can have eternal life, and then He rose again!

Now back to my thought process, there are very few people who actually have even short times of the “happily ever after” life. Most of us experience some pretty deep potholes in the road at times, and some of those potholes or even speed bumps are so large that when we hit them, it’s as though we are knocked off our feet or maybe hit so hard that we can hardly catch our breath.

But, in the middle of the situations, God is very much aware of the physical, relational, emotional and spiritual battles that surround us. He is aware of the challenges that will confront us all. He knows the stressors that each of us are encountering. He knows the good, the difficult and the bad things that have and will occur in each of our lives. And our God is the compassionate One who reaches out His hands so that we can receive His health and healing in all the different areas of our lives. He intentionally has given us some words from the Scripture to help us and remind us of where it is that we can find rest, peace, and hope.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT) “Then Jesus said, ‘Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.’”

I’m thinking that in our lives today, many times we feel as though we are on a roller coaster. I don’t know how many of you like the roller coaster, but I can say with certainty that it’s not in my top 10 things that I consider fun or exciting.

We’ve had a geopolitical roller coaster in the last year or so. That roller coaster has affected our daily lives. At the beginning of this year, you and I were paying generally from \$2.38 to \$2.45 per gallon of gas. But then Iran really started bullying the rest of the world. During the fighting earlier this year, gas prices went up to more than \$4.00 per gallon. With the MOU, it dropped down to \$2.92 in some places, but just this week, the price has increased because Iran didn’t keep their word regarding the free movement of ships through the Strait of Hormuz. We’ve been up – excited about a possibility of peace, and we’ve been down recognizing that the Islamic regime will never give up power. This unsteadiness in our world has certainly been a source of stress for us all. But it’s not just the results of the geopolitical world that impacts us.

When the status quo and predictability in life is altered, when it is shifted to the unpredictable, we frequently find ourselves with anxieties that are sometimes difficult to shake. Even though we like occasional adventures in life, there is always longing for the constant, for the unchanging, for a place of rest where we can relax. We long to be happy and to have peace, and the feelings of fear and sadness are the opposite of everything we truly desire.

So let's take a look at the verses that we read this morning. A few verses earlier, Jesus was denouncing the towns where He had done most of His miracles. In fact, He said that if the miracles done in Korazim and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, the people of Tyre and Sidon would have turned from their wicked ways. They would have worn burlap and put ashes on their heads to show their remorse. He even told the people of Capernaum where He had His headquarters, that they would not be honored in heaven but would go to the place of the dead. He compared it with Sodom, noting that the people of Sodom would have heard and changed their ways.

Then it is almost as though Jesus stops and prays out loud, thanking the Father for hiding these things from the ones who considered themselves wise and clever but revealing those things to those who were humble, childlike.

When He is finished making His point to the religious leaders, he turns to the regular people in the crowd. He looks over the people and demonstrates the greatest tender love and mercy. He says, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Can you hear the compassion, the care and concern in His voice? He looks out and sees that individual who is so tired from working hard, doing all the physical labor and even the hard work of keeping the laws the way the Pharisees demanded, and Jesus spoke these soothing words, "Come to me."

That word, "come", is not simply an invitation such as, "hey, do you want to come over here?" He's not saying, "if it works for you". Instead, the word "come" carries the force of a warm, tender but urgent imperative: "come," "come here," or "come now." It functions as a summons that demands personal response, not just mere observation. In this context, "come" invites the exhausted soul to exchange toil/work for divine rest. Jesus made it clear that in Him is found the place of rest.

The invitation is given to everyone who is weary and who carries heavy burdens. The word "weary" signifies that a lot of effort is being expended in order to do the work. And it is hard work, someone putting out a great amount of effort to be acceptable to God and to get through the difficult time. And, the "heavy burdens" talk about the requirement to endure. You have to carry the heavy burden until you can actually lay it down. This is the side of human misery. This is the part that drains any energy that may have remained after all the hard work.

So Jesus is tenderly inviting/commanding people who are so exhausted from the stressors of life and who are carrying heavy burdens, to come to Him. Why? So that He can give them rest.

Then He says, "Take." This is an intentional act. It's not something that occurs just because we come to church. Jesus was telling the people to take His yoke – become His disciples, His learners. He wasn't encouraging them to throw themselves into the legalisms of the Pharisaical laws. He wanted them to experience Him by faith. And as they would do that, He would give them rest from the heavy burdens. This is so true when we first come to Jesus and confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. He

gives us rest from the guilt and shame of sin. But this rest is also available to us when the experiences of life have become so heavy that it seems that we can't make it to the next rest stop.

He encourages us to come get into the yoke with Him. In olden days, two oxen were basically connected with a wooden yoke. One ox was older and wiser. The other ox was young. The owner put the two together. And Jesus encourages us to get into the yoke with Him because His yoke is well-fitting. He has the yoke that is tailor-made for our lives and our needs. The burden of doing His will is not a heavy burden (1 John 5:3). And here's another piece of this thing, about the yoke. With Jesus in the yoke with us, when we have no strength, then His strength is perfect. 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us that God's grace is sufficient, for His power works best in our weakness.

Then Jesus said, "Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus was wanting to teach the people that day, to help them as they were trying to navigate the challenges of their lives whether it was the strict ways of the Pharisees or just the difficulties inherent in being alive. He wanted to teach them how to make it through the rough spots. And notice that He says that He is humble and gentle at heart. What does that tell us? I think it tells us that He is acquainted with our deepest grief (Isaiah 53), the things that are tearing us apart, and He does not stand over us like a harsh taskmaster. Instead, He is humble and gentle. He will treat us with love and compassion.

And Jesus is invested in teaching us how to navigate the challenges of our lives. Yes, He wants to set us free from chains that have held us in the past. But He also wants us to know that He is right there with us in the middle of the extremely difficult times that we are encountering right now. As we learn more about Him, we find a deeper peace, because we trust Him more. Life becomes simplified and unified – think about that for a moment - around the person of our Lord Jesus.¹

It is generally thought that David wrote Psalm 119. David was looking to God in every part of that Psalm. It wasn't unusual for Him to be praying about the situations in which he found himself. In verses 113-120, David cries out to God, asking to be sustained. He asks God not to let his hope be crushed. Verse 114, David says, "You are my refuge and my shield; Your word is my source of hope."

Our challenge today is to realize that we must look to our God. He is our refuge. He is the One who stands like a shield between us and the arrows of the enemy. The devil is plotting against you constantly. He wants to destroy you and any faith that you have in Jesus. But God's word, the Bible, is our Source of hope.

Folks, we can't fix the problems of this world. We can't even fix many of the problems in our own lives. We must turn our eyes to our God and rely on Him. He knows that we are made from dust, and He knows that we will not be successful if we are relying on anything other than Him.

The LORD God tells us that He has everything we need. Are we dehydrated from fighting through the heat of the battle. He is our living water. In Isaiah 55, we find "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink – even if you have no money!" Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "Those who drink the water that I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 41.

life.” (John 4:14) Our God wants us to recognize that He is our hope. He is our strength. He is our living water. He is the only One to whom we can run and find help in our times of need. He is the One who looks with compassion on us even as He looked with compassion on the people that day when He said, “Come to Me ... and I will give you rest.”

I would venture to say that many of us, if not the majority of us, have had some very difficult situations in this past year. We’ve hit physical roadblocks. We’ve hit relational roadblocks. We’ve hit emotional roadblocks. We’ve hit spiritual roadblocks. Some of those things have just suddenly come on us. Some of those things have been with us for quite a while. They are difficult to handle, and many times, we want to hide them away, hoping that ignoring them will make them less real. But this morning, I want to invite you to see the compassion and love of our Lord Jesus. He is holding His hand out to you and saying, “Come to me. You are so tired and exhausted. You are carrying such a heavy burden. Come, let me give you rest.”