

Theme: Rest

Text: Matthew 11:25-30 (NKJV)

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶ "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²⁷ "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. ²⁸ "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Over the past few Sundays' sermons we've been talking about various types of work—the work we do for a living, the work we are called to do if we are in the public ministry (teachers and pastors), and the work that Jesus has commissioned us to do as His disciples. Namely "mission work:" sharing the Gospel message with others. This weekend we also probably will do some thinking about "work," as Labor Day is tomorrow, a day that our country has set aside to celebrate work and those who have labored for the well-being of our country. Obviously, work is a very important part of our lives, both physically and spiritually. But so is **rest**!

Have you ever thought about how important **rest** is, especially from a Biblical perspective? God set apart ("sanctified," "made holy") a whole day of the week from the very beginning that would be dedicated to **rest** when He rested on the 7th day of creation (**Genesis 2:2**). In connection with this day of rest, He even commands **rest** in one of His 10 commandments when He tells us, "**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy**" (**Exodus 20:8**). That's what the word "Sabbath" means: **rest**.

Now, we're not just talking about taking a day off, or getting some physical rest—which is important (even Jesus took time to rest physically during His life and ministry here on earth). We're talking about the kind of **rest** that Jesus speaks about in our text from the Gospel of Matthew:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (v. 28).

Let those beautiful, comforting, rest-giving words sink in...

Jesus' words are both a gracious invitation and a promise: **"Come to Me"** He invites us; **"and I will give you rest"** He promises. And as you know, Jesus *always* keeps His promises!

But who is this invitation and promise for? Jesus says **"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden."** The **"labor"** Jesus speaks of in this verse is a word that means to *struggle*, to *become weary* or *tired*. To be **"heavy laden"** means to carry a heavy burden. This invitation is therefore extended to all people. All of us are "burdened" and weary—not just with the earthly burdens and difficulties of our work, our daily tasks and chores, and our life, but more importantly with the heavy burden and labor that sin and the curse of the Law weighs upon all of us (**"The wages of sin is death" - Romans 6:23**). "Laboring" to try and keep God's Law and earn God's favor will also make us become hopelessly weary.

We can also add to this thought the empty striving for fulfillment and completeness through the things of this life. All our striving for peace, contentment, happiness, acceptance, and **rest** in anyone or anything in this world, other than Christ, will lead to disappointment and will make us weary and burdened. Jesus gives relief and rest from all these burdens! He invites you to turn them over to Him! Give to Jesus those burdens that cause you so much "restlessness" in life.

Do you find no **rest** because of the burden of the things you've done; guilt over sin? Jesus has completely removed that burden for you through His death on the cross. **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).**

Do you find no rest because of the burden of the things you have to do? Anxiety over "doing enough" for God, keeping His commandments, etc.? Jesus has completely removed that burden for you as well by keeping all of God's commands perfectly for you and me. There's nothing left to do to make God "happier" with you, or to make Him "love you more"—Jesus did it all for you, perfectly! Now the Bible tells us, **"You are complete in Him ... And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:10,13-14).**

That is the true rest Jesus is talking about in our text: **1. Spiritual rest** and **2. Eternal rest**. As He says in v. 29, **"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."** **"Rest for your souls"**—that is the key! Rest through the forgiveness of sins—**spiritual rest** in this life. Rest through the eternal salvation won by Jesus—heaven's **eternal rest** in the next. This is the **rest** which the writer of Hebrews wrote about, **"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His."** (Hebrews 4:9-10).

I hope that you are able to take some time to rest over this Labor Day weekend. Maybe you have the day off tomorrow and you'll have some time to relax and give your body some rest. As we do so, let's also remember the **rest** Jesus has given us and make time this weekend, and in the week ahead, for that more important **rest!** Jesus is calling you to Himself with His Words today. His very words have the power to turn your heart to Him and receive the rest that He has earned for you! His Holy Spirit works powerfully through these words of grace, **"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...rest for your souls" (v. 28-29).** That forgiveness and salvation is full and free and forever!

When we, through the Spirit's power, receive His invitation and come to Jesus we do find true **rest**—**1. Spiritual** and **2. Eternal rest** for our souls. Jesus...

- 1) takes away our worst burden completely (sin, death, and hell) and promises us eternal rest in heaven;
- 2) the burdens that remain in this life He helps us to bear. Our work and our service for Him then become a joy and a blessing.

Are you weary? Weary from the struggles of this life, the pressures and strains, the endless running after things that really don't satisfy, fulfill, or give us true rest?

Are you burdened? Burdened by guilt over past mistakes and sins? Loaded down with hurts and pain from a lifetime of living and striving for the wrong things?

"Come to Me," Jesus invites you. Place all those burdens and lay your weary soul down at the foot of His cross! There find His forgiveness. Look to His empty tomb and find there the life and power of your living Savior who has promised to give you the strength for your journey through this life and has guaranteed you an eternal life of bliss and **rest** in the next! **"Come to Me,"** Jesus invites us, **"all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** (v. 28). Amen.