

Resting in the Lord

Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You — man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You “resist the proud,” — yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for **You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.**

- St. Augustine - Confessions Book 1 written around 400 A.D.

The need for physical rest can become almost a longing, an emotional need. Our need for rest can become the most palpable when we are the most weak.

When we talk about physical rest, it is very easy for us all to understand that concept. We have all experienced this kind of exhaustion, this overwhelming need for physical rest.

But what happens when you rest but still feel exhausted? What do you do with the kind of exhaustion that you can't fix with a nap? This deep soul-weariness.

Multiple people over the past few years have talked about just feeling *tired*. Tired in a way that physical rest won't help.

This exhaustion goes beyond the physical into a spiritual exhaustion. We may try to medicate it with luxury, more money or power, or “positive thoughts” and self-actualization.

Ultimately, none of this will work.

This need for spiritual rest is nothing new. Jesus speaks to it in Matthew 11 where he says in this famous passage:

28 Come to me, all 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.

This is an interesting call. A call from Jesus to - rest. You may be used the call to work harder, try harder, be better, but Jesus says “you need to rest.” Not just any kind of rest, but “rest for your souls.”

Why do we need this rest?

I. Genesis 2:1-3

A. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

B. Why did God rest?

1. It was not because he was physically tired
2. God did not *need* to rest

C. God resting is him ceasing from one action to begin another

1. It indicates him shifting from “creating” to enjoying his creation
2. God did not need to create a world - he did not need us. He chose to create and then wanted to enjoy being with his creation in perfect harmony.

D. Understanding this kind of rest begins to illustrate its significance - there is a spiritual, communal aspect to this kind of rest

II. Genesis 2:15

A. **15** The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. **16** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

- B. We miss the full meaning of the word “put.” This word is intended to mean “to cause to rest”
- C. Young’s Literal Translation
 - 1. **15** And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it, and to keep it.
- D. When God “puts” man in the garden, he is placing him there not just be a gardener, drone, or worker, but he is placing him in his proper place in the created order - resting in place as he should
- E. Everything is as it should be - God is dwelling in fellowship with his creation and his creation is worshipping and obeying him

III. Genesis 3

- A. We know that this does not last
- B. **1** ”Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”
- C. Adam and Eve upset the balance by doing the one thing that God commanded them not to do
 - 1. This act of rebellion was man moving from his proper place and in essence rejecting God’s rest
 - 2. The audacity of man to declare that he knows better than God, this audacious arrogance is what we call - “sin.” We are right to say that our sin separates us from God, but it also separates us from God’s *rest*.
 - 3. The restlessness felt by a weary soul is a symptom of a heart that is not submitted to God and his created order
- D. Here, at the very beginning of time, we see the origin of the same soul-weariness, restlessness that you can feel today.
 - 1. This restlessness comes from our rebellion against God and his plan

“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

How do we enter into this rest?

Let's return to Matthew 11.

The main storyline of the Bible is God's redemptive plan for mankind, culminating in Jesus coming to earth and sacrificing himself for the sins of the world, to bring us back into right relationship with him, back into his *rest*.

This is why Jesus says in the famous passage in Matthew 11:28-30

28 Come to me, all 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.

Jesus describes salvation as a gift of rest. Back in right relationship with God - back where we should be, submitting to the Father.

Why is the yoke easy and the burden light? Because it is the yoke and the burden that we are supposed to bear! It fits.

The Christian life is hard, yes, but it should not be marked by misery. It can be a challenge, yes, but it should not feel oppressive. The moment your walk with God becomes an oppressive misery, you are being tempted to wander out of the rest of God. Walking through difficulty and trials is a temptation to wander out from God's rest - we can still hear the serpent whispering in our ear "did God really say...?" and we are tempted to believe that there is something better out there, some more perfect rest, something *else*. But we have seen where that leads. We have seen the turmoil, the strife, the restlessness and pain. The *wandering*. How could it be anything else when creation rebels against its creator?

“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

This is why this rest is so unique. This rest is directly tied to relationship.

- E. In Scripture we always see perfect rest as being tied to God’s presence. The two do not exist apart from one another.
- F. You can’t have this rest without God
 - 1. We try to find all kinds of way to rest without a relationship with God
 - 2. Self-actualization, positive imaging, all of these things are attempts to put our souls to rest apart from the Father
 - 3. How can creation rest apart from the Creator?
- G. Sin cannot be a part of this rest
 - 1. You can’t have this rest without repentance
 - 2. Sin goes against God’s character, his commands, who he is! Sin erodes creation itself. Sin causes weariness, exhaustion, wandering, pain, suffering. It is the expression of “things not being as they should be”

“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

Why would you not enter this rest? Why would anyone reject this offer of rest that ministers so clearly to what our souls need?

Example of a sheep - we are so used to captivity that we do not know how to embrace freedom.

You think that you know better than God.

You think that you understand creation better than the Creator!

You think that you can cure this spiritual exhaustion without the Father

We try to cure ourselves through...

Activity

As long as you are busy you don't have to feel anything.

Unbelief

You have a problem with what the Bible says about God

You do not get to define God for yourself

- H. You don't get to develop God in your own image
- I. Sin is not okay with God
- J. Legalism is not okay with God
- K. Some of you may need to hear this: you are wrong about who God is.
 - 1. You take Matthew 11 and make your own translation.
 - 2. If you read Matthew 11 and say "that just doesn't seem quite right," you are simply not believing that God is who he says he is.

"You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

Response

Non Christian

Enter into God's rest

This weariness has plagued mankind since the Garden

You will not find rest for your weary soul anywhere else - anyone else who says they can give it to you is lying to you

Christian

You still hear that whisper in your ear saying "Did God really say...?"

You are resistant to God's rest because even though you would say you know him and love him - secretly you just really think that you know better than he does.

Have you forgotten that the call of Christ is a call to rest? Have you gotten wrapped up in trying to fix everything yourself, work so hard, that you have forgotten to rest?

Communion

We have the blessing of being able to observe communion today. Communion is a great opportunity for us to consider the call of Christ to rest. Picture Christ sitting around the table with his disciples, eating the last supper.

Matthew 26:26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." **27** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, **28** for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

This is a picture of being with God, in God's rest. We partake in communion to remember Christ's sacrifice, and also to remind us of the good news of the gospel. Furthermore, it is a time to recenter and refocus our hearts that are so prone to wander.