

Come to Jesus

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

“Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, / With conquering limbs astride from land to land; / Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand / A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame / Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name Mother of Exiles. / From her beacon-hand / Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command / The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

‘Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!’ cries she / With silent lips. ‘Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!’”¹

The words you just heard come from a poem titled, “The New Colossus” by Emily Lazarus. They may not be words you find familiar, but you will recognize one of the locations where these words are found, the Statue of Liberty. And on this weekend, when our country recognizes its 250th birthday it seemed fitting to borrow a small piece of that history that can help us reflect on our Gospel reading this weekend.

While there is much being said by the words of this poem and its direct link to the Statue of Liberty, the piece for us to focus on this weekend comes from this line, “‘Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.’” In this passage, we hear the call to those who are looking for rest. There’s an implied invitation and reception for those searching for a break; that they can find rest in the land that this statute guards.

This small piece of history points to a greater reality that through the years, people have been searching for rest. Generation after generation has been seeking rest for different reasons and in different places. Sometimes, it can be a fresh start in a new location. Other times, it can be escaping past mistakes and beginning fresh with a clean slate. Then there are times where it can be a simple break from the usual routine. Rest is sought frequently.

Yet, we don’t simply need world history or our nation’s history to make this point. Consider your own personal history. What kind of rest have you sought and where have you looked for that rest? Was it that twenty-minute power nap when the rest of the family was occupied? Was it endlessly scrolling your favorite influencer’s social media? Have you been trying to find rest via an addiction? Are you trying to find rest through transactional relationships – using others for a specific benefit you crave?

Our personal histories are littered with attempts to find rest. While some attempts are more God-pleasing than others, our attempts are ongoing. We find one thing that we think works until it doesn’t. And at some point, we can start to believe that this search is endless and maybe even fruitless. In our disgust and dissatisfaction, we begin to cling to that challenging notion that we’ll just rest when we’re dead. We might as well as keep pushing through ignoring any need to rest until something forces us to stop and finally consider rest again.

What an honest review of our personal histories shows us is that we struggle to find rest. Our search for rest looks like an iceberg in the water. Above the water we see some of the iceberg, but we can’t comprehend how much more of the iceberg remains underneath the water. Likewise, we might recognize the need for rest, but we often miss the depth of this need. The areas of our lives that we see need rest are a product of a much greater rest issue.

Without understanding this greater need, we only address part of our rest problem. We look for solutions that address aspects of the rest we want, likely the ones that are the most intense for us at the moment and then stop addressing the rest we need once our immediate concerns are met. We convince ourselves that a temporary fix is enough and overlook the truth that these temporary fixes are only

¹ The New Colossus by Emma Lazarus (1883).

covering up the greater need. We believe that our rest solutions are working only to realize later that we aren't as rested and refreshed as we first thought. Maybe we must face the sadder reality that our rest solutions aren't actually helping but draining us.

Yes, we've certainly come a long way in learning and finding rest for our bodies. We know numerous ways to soothe and heal sore and achy muscles. We're discovering new and better ways to bring relief to overwhelmed and anxious minds. We're refining ways to uplift a broken and despairing heart. But our bodily rest is only part of the picture. We also need rest for our souls. We've been created with both body and soul and without addressing our souls need for rest, our bodily rest will never be enough. Satisfying rest addresses both body and soul. And addressing rest for our souls isn't something we can do on our own.

Addressing rest for our souls begins with a relationship with the One who gave us both our bodies and our souls. It's a relationship that we so often try to find and establish on our own terms and with our own means, but that doesn't really work. This relationship is hidden from any wisdom, logic, or understanding that we might use. This relationship is hidden in Jesus. Jesus is the One to whom all things have been given. He alone is the One who knows God the Father, our creator. He alone is the One who can make our creator, our heavenly Father, known to us.

Thanks be to Jesus, that He isn't stingy when it comes to revealing His Father. Hear again His open invitation, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** (*Matthew 11:28*) Jesus' words come to us right now so that we might come to Him. We are a part of the “all” that He invites. He knows the depth of our need for rest and has been leading us to recognize how much greater our need is beyond what we can solve. And instead of just highlighting our overwhelming need and leaving us holding up this burden ourselves, He brings the solution.

“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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (*Matthew 11:29-30*) Jesus knows how we've sought rest by yoking ourselves to so many different things in this world; to solutions that aren't ultimately restful. So, He comes to remove our self-made yokes and instead places His on us. He knows that we're going to yoke ourselves to something and so He steps in to protect us and make sure that we're yoked to the rest our souls need.

Jesus is clear. His yoke isn't designed to hurt or punish us. His yoke is made so that we can learn from Him; so that we might see His gentleness and humility. He has linked Himself to us to teach and guide us through this restless life to the life of eternal rest He has already won for us. He has come to us to completely address the rest we need now and for the future. Yoked to Jesus, the depth of our rest issue is addressed.

Yoked to Jesus, we are yoked to His righteous life. Yoked to Jesus, we are yoked to His innocent suffering. Yoked to Jesus, we are yoked to His sin-satisfying death. Yoked to Jesus, we are yoked to His life-giving resurrection. Yoked to Jesus, we are yoked to soul-refreshing forgiveness, life, and salvation. Yoked to Jesus, we come and find rest.

This means that this weekend, your personal history changes. The rest you've been seeking and addressing on your own, attempting temporary fixes here and there now has the permanent solution. All those bodily means of rest that have left you wanting, now take a backseat to the satisfying invitation and answer your Savior delivers. For as much as we prioritize physical, mental, and emotional rest for our bodies, by God's grace we recognize that we need to prioritize rest for our souls even more. So, come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus and rest. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan