

Rest for Your Souls

Matt. 11:27-30

They say there are only two guarantees in life: “Death and taxes.” But I guess in America, there’s another guarantee: “Political TV Ads.” Buckle up because the ads are going to keep coming all the way till November!

Has anyone else been following the Presidential Election process this year? It’s better than reality TV. Did anyone see the debates when there were 10 or 12 guys on the stage at one time! And now that there are only 4 it’s only gotten crazier!

Politicians, and even the “anti-politicians” – they all make promises. That’s what they do. And this year, the promises have seemingly never been bigger. “Free College for all.” “Universal Healthcare.” “We’ll fix Washington.” “Jobs for all.” “Peace in the Middle East.” “No more IRS.” “A Supreme Court that will do what we want.”

Did you ever wonder if some of these promises are “Too good to be true!” Can any single person really enact the broad sweeping changes that are being promised across the board? Can anyone truly offer us real security from ISIS, financial woes and general instability?

We can certainly hope for big steps forward, but anything done by humanity is tentative at best: Rome wasn’t built in a day, but I think it fell in 1!

Now as we look at our text, we’ll see the contrast I hope I’ve set up. Jesus makes an incredible promise in our text. And in light of the problems facing Israel in his day, it was as unbelievable as any made on America’s campaign trail.

Jesus said: “Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I

will give you rest.”

I can hear Jewish people in the crowd that day saying, “But you don’t understand Rabbi. The Roman centurion in my town has threatened to violate my daughter if I don’t pay double the taxes I owe.” Another says, “How can this Jesus guarantee I’ll have rest, when he doesn’t know me and the sorrow I have?” Some think back to God’s promise to give Israel rest from her enemies. They hang their head and say, “But even God hasn’t given us this rest yet, how does this young teacher really expect us to believe that He can?”

And before we look down on those Israelite skeptics, look at our own excuses. Some of us have this verse on the wall of our home. We have it memorized, but yet we still feel heavy laden and burdened with care. Yes, Jesus promises rest – but that must just be something mainly spiritual – it is too simple to think Jesus is really the answer to my challenging problems.

Can it be that we look at this text and think, deep down inside, “it is really too good to be true!?” Can Jesus really give us rest?

READ: [Matt. 11:27-30](#)

TRANSITION: A promise is only as good as who is making it, so it is fitting that our text has been detailing who this man is who offers such a promise.

I. The PERSON offering REST (Matt. 11:27, 29)

A. Jesus is the Promised Messiah – (11:1-19)

1. The chapter begins with John the Baptist wondering if Jesus really is the Messiah.
2. This question is answered decisively by reference to:
 - Scriptures fulfilled, and amazing deeds performed
3. Yet people are rejecting this Messiah (v. 16-19)

B. Jesus is the Authoritative Judge – (11:20-24)

1. Jesus is more than a nice man offering rest, he is Judge.
2. Proper response to Jesus is repentance.
3. More light = more judgment
 - We have more light than those cities but what have we done with that?
4. Jesus also knows the “what if”s – yet that doesn’t prevent him from judging based on our actions – we are responsible to obey, no matter what our excuses.

C. Jesus is the Sovereign Son – (11:25-27)

1. Jesus rejoices in his Father’s Sovereignty.
 - Sovereignty and election can be hard truths – but they are God’s truths, not ours. And we should rejoice in them.
2. Jesus as God’s Son shares that Sovereignty.
 - Jesus is entrusted with All Things
 - He is the only one who truly knows God.
 - Jesus chooses to reveal the Father to whomever he wills.
 - At some level then, saving faith is a matter of revelation and Jesus’ choice.
 - But this doesn’t negate our responsibility (v. 20-24)
 - It is noteworthy that from this clear expression of election, Jesus flows naturally to an invitation to all – all who are weary... are invited to come”

D. Jesus is the Patient Teacher - (11:29)

1. He is “meek and Lowly” – he won’t berate you, or get impatient with you (like parents sometimes do with kids.)
2. He is patient

TRANSITION: Jesus is the hoped for one – the Messiah. He has the right and authority to Judge – and so he certainly can offer rest. Moreover as the Sovereign Son, he is in a unique position to offer revelation of God – and rest at His hand. And not only that, never was anyone meeker and more humble than this Jesus. He is a patient teacher who will guide us into rest. What then is rest – what is it that he offers? We’re going to go on a brief tour through the Bible to more fully understand what lies behind this idea of rest.

II. The PROMISE of REST (11:28)

Gen. 2:2 – God rested from his work. Adam & Eve were called to share Gods’ Rest” – but they rejected that, and instead had “no rest” from labors.

Gen. 5:29 – Noah will ring “rest” or relief from our work & painful toil.

Noah’s name sounds like “rest” This hints at the Messiah’s work to come, in Noah’s footsteps, to do sacrifice and remove God’s wrath from the earth.

Gen. 12 – Abraham was promised a land, & it would be a place of rest.

Deut. 12:9-11 – “Come to the rest & to the inheritance God is giving you.”

Josh. 1:13 – “The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest & will give you this land.”

Josh. 21:43-44 – [God] gave them all the land & gave them “rest on every side”

2 Sam. 7:1, 11 – God gave David rest from enemies & promised him a son

1 Chron. 22:9-10 – added that David’s son would be “a man of rest,” having rest from his enemies would qualify him to build the Temple.

2 Chron. 6:41 – The Temple was God’s resting place

God wanted Israel to share His Rest, just like he had wanted Adam & Eve to.

The Temple is the place of God’s presence & rest in the Land

Ps. 95:11 – refers to Gods’ rejecting the first generation of the Israelites from entering the Promised Land. It says “They shall not enter my rest.”

So we see that connected with REST is God’s PRESENCE, and ultimately Knowing God & God’s Glory. We see this in again in Exod. 33:13-14 – Moses begs God not to forsake them, and God renews his promise: “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

This REST is something even the Church can enjoy:

Heb. 3 & 4 quotes Ps. 95:11 & applies it to us: 4:9 “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” / 4:11 “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest”

We can experience God’s rest now and share in eternal rest in God’s presence forever. The TEMPLE, God’s resting place – is in US. God rests or dwells in us: Eph. 2; 1 Cor. 3 & 6; 1 Pet. 2.

Here in Matt. 11, Jesus reveals God the Father to us – this is REST.

John 17:3 – “This is eternal life that they know you the only true God.” Jesus sharing this Trinitarian love with us brings true rest.

TRANSITION: This experience of resting from warfare, inheriting a good land, enjoying God’s presence: all of it can sadly seem out of reach. It is for those who don’t deal with the problems I have. This is for the people who got an A in Sunday school. I still just don’t see how this helps me? Well, look at the text, who is it who is offered this rest?

III. The PEOPLE needing REST (11:28)

- **Lowly and childlike – not High & Mighty (v. 25)**
 - 1 Cor. 1:26-27 – “not many wise, powerful, noble – instead the “weak, low and despised” (still *chosen)
- **Burdened & Weary & Heavy Laden (v. 28)**

1. The talk of “yoke” would make Jesus’ hearers think of the instruction of Torah. Torah gave wisdom, if you undertook the yoke.
2. But in Jesus’ day, the path of Torah was abused. People were burdened and weary
 - Matt. 23:4 “*They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.*”

- **Those who are laboring**

- **Everyone**

- **Today this would be**

- Those trying to earn favor & appease their conscience
- Those who may be enduring problems & pain
- Those who are depressed, sorrowful, or even doubting (like John the Baptist in the start of our chapter)
- Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses – Heb. 4:15

ANALOGY: So everyone can come and receive rest. Jesus has the right to offer it. But there’s got to be a catch, right? It’s too hard and impractical. It must be some secret to rest, but still probably above my reach. Well, have no fear, because look closer: Jesus says he will give rest – it is a gift and he is providing it.

IV. The PROVISION of REST (11:28-29)

A. Rest is provided by Jesus.

1. He’s not showing us 7 steps to a peaceful life, or even how to have your best life now.
2. Jesus is pledging to give us rest.
3. The Puritan Thomas Brooks finds great comfort in this:

“Come,” saith Christ, “and I will give you rest.” I will not show you rest, nor barely tell you of rest, but I will give you

*rest. I am faithfulness itself, and cannot lie, I **will** give you rest. I that have the greatest power to give it, the greatest will to give it, the greatest right to give it, come, laden sinners, and **I** will give you rest. – Thomas Brooks*

4. In vs. 29, Jesus quotes Jeremiah 6:16 “find rest for your souls.” In Jeremiah, it is Jehovah who offers this rest. (Similarly in Ex. 33:15 it was Jehovah and His Presence going with them that would give them rest.) Here Jesus himself, stands in the place of God (and we know as God’s equal), and offers rest.

ANALOGY: Jesus gives us rest – but he does so by means of walking alongside us and asking us to follow him and take his yoke. No, this isn’t a catch. In fact, it is what makes this rest truly wonderful.

V. The PATH of REST (11:29-30)

A. The YOKE

1. A Yoke could be for one animal alone, but when it was for 2 animals, often it would be an older/stronger/more fully trained animal that would be paired with a novice/weaker/younger animal.
2. Jesus is not holding the reins standing behind you giving you a yoke to perform for him. He is shouldering the yoke with you, training you (“learn”), disciplining you, and doing the hard labor for you.
3. In a sense, Jesus is saying “Learn to be my disciple” and that is what will give you rest for your souls.

B. The PATH

1. Jeremiah 6:16 has this same path analogy: “Thus says the LORD, stand by the roads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is – and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”
2. Sadly that verse goes on to say “But they said, we will not walk in it.” – That is parallel with “rejecting God’s law” and those lawbreakers are promised judgment.

C. APPLICATION

1. Learn from Jesus, take his Yoke
2. OBEY him
 - 1 John 5:3 – His commands are not burdensome
3. TRUST Jesus – go to Him, cast your cares up on him
 - 1 Pet. 5:7
4. CONFIDE in him
5. Find REFUGE in him
6. BELIEVE His promise that He will GIVE REST
7. Don’t REJECT Him and His law

ANALOGY: This rest is fellowship with Jesus, it is enjoying God’s presence, it is not fearing anymore because we have confidence in Jesus, it is trusting God. This has real physical benefits, but it also endures. Yes this is spiritual life, but it is a real tangible experience in the here and now as well.

VI. The PERMANENCE of REST (11:29-30)

A. This is not a temporary peace, but true soul-rest

B. Ps. 16:11 – “In God’s presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore”

C. True rest and peace is only found in God's presence

D. Jesus gives us perfect peace

8. Is. 26:3-4 and John 14:27

E. God dwells with us now, and one day that will be a heavenly and bodily experience

9. **Rev. 14:13** "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord... that they may rest from their labors"

10. **Rev. 21** finds the ultimate fulfillment of the Promised Land where we find true rest – in the new heavens and new earth – with God's presence as our TEMPLE forever.

May we all find lasting hope through the revelation of the Father and His presence to us, through his Son Jesus Christ.

Closing:

Now, if you don't trust Jesus personally as your Savior, if you can't take Communion with us in a few moments as one who is trusting truly in Jesus' blood spilled out for you, then you can't truly experience this rest that we've been talking about. This text stands as an invitation for all to come. You can find true life and rest. You can find forgiveness of sins and eternal hope in heaven too.

For those of us, who do profess personal faith in Jesus – those who trust Jesus as their personal Savior, I hope you realize there is an invitation here for you too. We need to realize there is so much more than just a ticket to heaven. We should be in yoke with Jesus now enjoying true rest.

If you are weighed down with cares and worries, if you are at your wit's end. If you are constantly plagued by doubt, despair and depression: look at Jesus' offer here. Find rest in Him. Follow that path, take his yoke, and learn of him. He can give you, no, he WILL give you rest.