

Matthew 11:28 – Come to Me ...

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

We all have favorite Bible passages. **“Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”** Is that one of your favorites? It was one of Luther’s favorites. Jesus invites the weary, the heavy burdened, those in a challenging life to come to Him. It is a gracious invitation and a somber acknowledgment that life is wearisome, it is disappointing, it is filled with sorrows, and it is hard. There are no short cuts to happiness, no secret paths to easy street, and no way to avoid life's sharp edges. But we have Jesus.

Jesus says, **“Come to me ...”** Jesus is not a hoarder of hidden wisdom who doles it out in dribs and drabs to those who earn it. Jesus is not the giver of secrets to the worthy. Jesus is not the source for short cuts or life tips. No, what Jesus has to give is Himself. He gives Himself to those who labor and are heavy burdened.

We do not come to Jesus for these things but for Jesus Himself. We do not find Jesus in order to find something we want but Jesus finds us to give Himself to us. He is our peace. He is our forgiveness. He is our mercy. He is our grace. He is our hope. He is our righteousness. We come to Jesus not for something but for the someone – Him whom the Father has sent to rescue His lost and condemned people from their sins, from the death that threatens, and from our own sinful selves that war against God and the future He has prepared for us.

Too many Christians have been sucked in by purveyors of a self-help religion who try to make Jesus into some guru who can help you improve your lot in life but that is not who Jesus is. We have been disappointed already by the false hopes and false claims of those who put words into the mouth of Jesus. No one can give us all we want. Only Jesus can give us what we need. All we need is Jesus and everyone who needs finds in Jesus relief from the burden of sin, an end to the threats of death, and the peace that does not evaporate when life goes bad. He is the only rescue and refuge we need and faith opens our eyes to see this.

Let me tell you a secret. Everyone has it hard. It may be a different hard than you have but no one is immune from life's struggles. Everyone has scars from the battles of life. Everyone has bled from the wounds life has inflicted. Everyone feels the hurts of life. Everyone has regrets. Everyone has doubts. Everyone has tears that refuse to dry up. Everyone aches with the pains of life and its disappointments. Everybody comes to Jesus broken, shamed by sin, marked for death.

Come to Me, says Jesus, and I will give You rest. Give up the false dream of a secret path to a successful life and let go of the illusion that if you just try hard enough you will find a way. Jesus has found the way for you. He offered His flesh into suffering to redeem you and He bore the pain of your death to save you. But He has come for something better than an easier tomorrow. He died and rose to bestow upon you eternity. Once you have eternity, you are finally free to live today. There is no today unless you have eternity in Christ.

Christ has come not simply to give you rest from struggles and relief from pain and repayment for your loss. He has come to give you something you cannot earn or merit for yourself. He has come to give you rest from sin through forgiveness and the gift of a clear conscience as a child of God redeemed, washed, and clothed in righteousness.

Let's be real. People do not seek to end their lives because they did not get the present they wanted or the promotion at work or the girl or guy they fantasized over. People are driven to despair because they live in the chains of sin and cannot free themselves. People are driven to choose death because their consciences, shame, and regret make it impossible to live. They have no hope left. This is why Christ came and why He invites us to come to Him. The greatest possession of all is that clear conscience absolved by the voice of Christ and the forgiveness and mercy to show to others as Christ has shown you.

We were created to know a real sabbath rest from life, when not only work ends but the grip of life is released from us. Sin stole that rest from us and made it hard for us to let go of our worries or find release from our fears or an end to our anxieties. What sin stole, Christ came to restore. That is rest, rest borne of true and everlasting peace in the blood of Jesus. We belong to Him and nothing can separate us from the power of His love. This is the sabbath rest lost to us in Eden and tasted anew in the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation that satisfies our want and desire fully and finally.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death – for Jesus and for us. And this is why He bids us come. Here is rest from death. I have told you before that you wear a watch and keep a calendar because you have limited time. Your bucket lists of things are signs that death may be near and cannot be put off. Except by Jesus. Jesus offers you a life which is no longer counted in years or lived in fear. He gives you the eternal outcome of your life in heaven so that you can be free to live today.

Let me tell you another secret. We think sleep is rest but a wise man once said that sleep is practice for death. Yes, that is what sin has done; it has stolen even the rest from sleep. What should be peaceful has been filled with nightmares and restlessness. We find it hard to sleep because sin stole joy from life and rest from sleep. But Jesus has now stolen our lives back. He took our sin so that our joy may return and He rested in the grave so that we might not fear death anymore.

Come to Me, bids Jesus. He is here to give us not a short cut or a life tip but Himself, hidden in the voice of His Word, planted in baptismal water, and tasted in bread and wine. When Jesus bids us come to Him, He is inviting us to His House, to the place where the voice of men is silent so that the Son of Man might be heard, where water drowns the sinner to raise him up to life stronger than death, and where the food we want is replaced with food that satisfies all want, all desire, and all need. Jesus does not have something to give you but someone, His own self. Christ has not come to give you an easier life. He has come to give you Himself. He is the way, the truth and the life.

You want to know what forgiveness looks like? It looks like Jesus. You want to know what joy looks like? It looks like Jesus. You want to know what rest looks like? It looks like Jesus. So give it all to the Lord who gave His all for you and He will create in you a new and clean heart, restore to you the joy of your salvation, and He will build you up into the life that death cannot touch. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. He has done the heavy lifting. Come to Him and enjoy His rest.