

February 27, 2022 7 Words of Jesus Pt. 7 Matthew 11:25-30

As the Kingston Trio once said in introduction to one of their popular songs, "These are times that try our souls. With that in mind let me remind you of the 7 words of Jesus we have been listening to over the last 6 weeks and this morning.

(1) Jesus said we need a rebirth. (2) HE said that now, in HIMSELF, the Kingdom is at hand. (3) He reminded us that we need more than bread...HIS word, God's word. (4) HE said, "It is finished," the work of saving us. (5) Jesus reminded us, HE is the resurrection and life. HE asked, do we believe HIM? (6) HE called us to pray, to ask, seek and knock. HE said we would receive. And (7) HE issued another invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28,29)

This morning, I can say to you with confidence, I assume that is why you are here. That is what you are doing. You come here, not seeking me, but the One who sent me. You come looking for an encounter with Jesus. And I assure you my prayer for you is that you will find HIM present. Jesus died on the cross. There can be no question of that. HE was pronounced dead and HE was buried in the tomb. But the 3rd day, on a Sunday morning, which is why we gather like this, the tomb was empty. More importantly Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene and the other women, in succeeding days HE was

seen by others, groups of HIS followers. And last of all HE was seen by Paul. Our inheritance in faith is the celebration of one simple fact. HE is risen. Praise the Lord.

He has issued you and I an invitation. "Come to me," says Jesus. And here we are gathered together in the upper room of this building. Are you weary? I can assure you I am weary. I am old, and tired. Tired of the pandemic. Tired of bad news. Our world hangs on the brink of a potentially catastrophic war. That man in Russia is not mad or crazy. He is calculating and mean. He wants more land and more power. And I cannot do very much about it except pray, and pray, and pray. I am not much different than you are. I am burdened by the struggle to live, to love my family, to serve in my humble ways.

What I can tell you is that Jesus bids us come to HIM. HE calls us to come to Him and to bring our weariness and the weight of our troubles, our problems and our fears. He makes us a promise that we need to take very seriously. HE says to us bring the things that weigh you down and worry you to me...to HIM. HIS promise is that if we dare to do so, we will receive something from HIM that we yearn for.... Rest. Can it be that easy? Jesus does not try to persuade us with what we would call impressive arguments. HE says, to you, to me, to us all. "Come." Come with all your baggage. "Come to me, and I will give you rest."

It's an invitation. Do you dare to accept it? Do we dare to try? Do we exercise our wills to take HIS word at face value? I am hungry for this.

Jesus does not say it can be obtained by just laying back on our beds and closing our eyes to the realities of life in our world. HE says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." HE invites us to work at it. When oxen are yoked together it is not to stand idly by. It means the same as being harnessed to pull, to struggle, to work. Jesus calls us once again, to team up. To throw our weight against the loaded wagon. To pull together. But it is HIS yoke, Jesus yoke we are invited to accept.

A friend sat in my living room and said this past week, "If people just lived like Jesus did, what a different world this would be." At the time the world was hoping, war could be averted in the Ukraine. Today we know it cannot. Our burdens have been added unto. And we have had added to the load the release of information that Russia believes it can win a limited nuclear war...whatever that means. Madness? Calculation?

Jesus invites us to be yoked, harnessed to the work that lies before us. HE calls us to learn from HIM, for HE is gentle and humble in heart. He ups the ante, HE says do this, "and you will find rest for your souls." If our spirits find rest, our bodies will respond. We will be able to do what we have to do, whatever that is. What it means is that we will be walking with God. Walking with Jesus. Working with Jesus. In tune with our Maker, Defender and Friend. "What a friend we have in Jesus."

As part of my own attempt to prepare for Easter, and praise God, apparently we are going to have a shot at celebrating Easter in, in-person worship this year. As part of my personal preparation I have been reading Lee Strobel's little book, *The Case For The Resurrection*. If you have ever wondered just how sound it is to trust in Jesus, to trust in God, I highly recommend it. As part of his own desire to understand he went to the experts and he has written an account that makes it plain, Jesus died. Jesus was buried. The tomb was empty. And the risen Lord was seen by many, many, many people who were willing to die serving God because they were certain...it is true.

A theologian wrote, "Every Sunday people who go to church, walk into the sanctuary with one question in some part of their minds. Is it true?" I am here to tell you once, and again, and over and over, it is true. He is risen. He saves. He calls you to serve Him. He promises you rest for your souls.

Jesus says something else. It may surprise you. But we have it in Jesus own words. HE says, "You will find rest for your souls, coming to me. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." We have a tendency to make things harder than they are. We worry and we sweat over whether or not we are up to the task. Whether we will get it right. Whether we will dot our "I's" and cross our "T's". I go back to Jesus question to Mary and Martha after the death of their brother. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?" Much of the

time we suffer not because of what we can or cannot do, but because of a crisis of faith.

Jesus says the yoke we are shouldering in HIS service “is easy” to bear. And the burden HE places upon us “is light.” There is a sense in which all we have to do is breathe, and let the weight of responsibility go. “Follow me,” the Master said. “We will follow Jesus.”

Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Let us come to HIM in prayer.

Lord Jesus. Once again we find ourselves in troubling and trying times. We watch the news to understand what is happening and we find ourselves unable to sleep. We study what we understand to be our personal problems and we find ourselves more deeply troubled and rest alludes us. We come to you because we have heard what you said and because we do have a measure of faith. We pray help us to have more. But even more importantly, we come to you seeking rest for our souls. We seek confidence that our sins are forgiven. That the accomplishment of the cross was and is for us. Grant us your peace we pray. Grant us your rest that we might do the work before us. Amen