

June 5, 2022 The Invitation Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus said, "Come to me." It is an invitation. And like all meaningful invitations it is offered freely and generously. Jesus is in no way obligated to open HIS heart to us, to invite us in. But HE does. There are so many things said about God in the great theological documents of the Church and its heritage of faith. What we do not hear so much about is the reality that God is an inviting God. And this is a major sign of the divinity of Jesus. HE invites. HE invites the poor. HE invites the lame. HE invites those who appear to be important in the world's scheme of things. But HE pointedly and repeatedly invites those who are normally ignored and overlooked. HE invites men and women with equal passion. He invites the sinful with the grace of the Redeemer.

HE invites you. HE invites me. And HE invites us in a very clear awareness that we are struggling. "Come to me all you who are weary, and burdened." I cannot speak for all of us, but I note as I continue to age that I go to bed tired. And I struggle in the morning. Weariness lingers upon me. The earliest part of the mornings seem to me to be the hardest part of the day. So often I would sooner go back to my bed rather than greet the day with eagerness.

And the invitation of Jesus is an extremely generous invitation. "Come to me all of you." HE is eager that none be left behind. That none be left out. Our gracious and loving Redeemer invites us to come to HIM to receive relief. You who

are weary. YOU who are burdened. The KJV uses different words that make oh so clear what Jesus is offering. "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Is it not the work of life that wearies us so? The list of things that must be done. The list of places we need to go. The constant problem of getting it all in, all done. The day is not long enough. Our energy is not great enough. And if we are truthful, our energy never was.

That is the key element. The recognition that it is beyond us to deal with all the labour of the day. All the labour of being heavy laden. Weighed down. Weighed down with the burden of our sin and our sinfulness. And our responsibility. Even when we are wise enough to repent and seek solace in the grace of our Lord, we turn around and repeat our misdeeds. We lose our tempers. We speak carelessly. We talk about bad luck, as though there were no God's design to our lives and our living. We blame others for what is wrong in our own hearts and souls. We blame circumstance as though we had no choice concerning our misdeeds, and the words cast carelessly about.

And all the time the burden of our sin gets heavier. Harder to carry. Harder to manage. "Come to me. All of you. Come to me," says Jesus. "I will give you rest." There are at least two things we need to take note of. The first is that we need to recognize we are utterly lost. That there is nothing we can do to relieve ourselves of the burden of our sins. Which is to say we need to recognize frankly and honestly the totality of our neediness.

Of course the second thing we need to recognize, without apology or limitation is that God has made a way for us in Jesus just as certainly as HE parted the waters of the Red sea to free the Hebrew slaves of their Egyptian masters. And their desire for revenge. And yes, we are back to the cross and Calvary, and the shed blood of Christ to redeem. We need to accept a truth that often alludes us. That salvation is not something we earn by keeping the rules, by keeping the commandments. It is something we receive as a gift that is given and offered. And we need to recognize that what Jesus did that Friday on the cross was a complete and utter saving of us from the very burdens we carry and the judgement we fear will descend upon us no matter what we do or decide.

What Jesus did, HE did completely. "It is finished!" HE cried. The penalty for our sins has been paid to the last penny. And there shall not be a second demand beyond HIS sacrifice. We accuse ourselves needlessly. We doubt for want of faith to trust in the Lord and not to our own understanding.

In verse 29 the invitation turns from salvation to service. "Take my yoke upon you." There is issued to us a call to submit. To submit to the will of our Lord and Master. To submit our lives to God and whatever shall occur for HE is in charge. To be willing to serve the Lord with all our heart and mind, soul and body. It is perhaps the hardest thing asked of us. To give up the rebelliousness of wanting to be in control. To let God's will be done in us, and around us, and for us.

In Romans 12, verses 1 and 2 we read, “I urge you...in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God...this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is...HIS good pleasing and perfect will.”

Jesus says, “And learn from me.” As we acknowledge God’s leadership in every area of our lives, HE trains us in HIS ways. We are HIS people. We are HIS people, and the sheep of HIS pasture. Cared for. Shepherded. Neither under the control of the whims of chance or the choices we might make just on our own. We find our place in creation. We find our place in God’s world.

Jesus says, “For I am meek and lowly in heart.” This is not about being ordered about at the will of the church, nor the will of the clergy who serve in the church. It is about learning to imitate the example of Jesus. HE washed the feet of the disciples. Peter objected because what Jesus was doing was taking upon HIMSELF the work of the lowliest household servant. One without power and privilege. It is part of what we are to actually learn and practice. To love and care for one another as though we were all of one family. Cherished and cherishing. Putting ourselves at the service of the neediest among us. Caring for one another as members of the family of God.

And then there is a most wonderful promise. “And you will find rest unto your souls.”

We tend to balk at that word soul. We would rather believe we are masters of our fate and in control of the details of our lives. Our spirits are weary as well as our flesh. It is not just our muscles that ache and contract in cramping pain from the way we invest in living. We are soul weary. It is in Jesus, and submitting to HIS Lordship our souls find rest. It is a matter of focus. Letting go and letting God. Ceasing the effort to be great and good. Giving ourselves to the singular cause of being “in Christ,” like HIM in the way we treat others and then like HIM in the way we see ourselves. And like HIM in the way we seek the Father’s will for us and those around us.

Always remember, our Lord is an inviting Lord. HE invites us to the water of life. And He invites us to taste and see...that HE is good.

Let us pray;

Lord help us to leave our baggage and our burdens at the foot of the cross. Help us to let you be Lord of our lives in every way, in the days that remain. Grant us the comfort of your presence. The guidance of YOUR Spirit. And the restfulness of service rendered to others without seeking reward. In Jesus name we pray. Amen