

Text: *Matthew 11:25-30*

Working Title: *The Rest*

Theme: *The Rest to be enjoyed in Christ*

Purpose: *Enjoy Christ's Rest in the midst of trouble and pressure.*

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1. Bibliography

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2. Sermon Text

PR500 Sermon on Rest for the 20. May 1993 REV. B

1. Our need for Rest and Peace

We are longing for Rest and Peace.

Especially now that the quarter of our studies at Fuller draws to an end, we develop an acute awareness of our need for Rest. Book reports, Papers and the final exams are coming up. Deadlines are hunting us. Not to mention the Sermons we have to prepare for this class.

And there are lots of other things that add to our Unrest.

There is the need for money which we especially felt in the last days, when we had to register and pay for the summer classes.

There is the need to take care of our responsibilities to our spouses and our children.

There is our church that needs our involvement and our ministry. There is the daily flood of new information through TV we have to absorb. There is the luxury of friendships.

There is, There is, there is there is certainly more.

How can we stand all of this? Can we fulfill all these demands and cope with the problems that come up in all of these areas? When can we get away from all of it?

We need Rest and we are longing for Peace.

2. Christ on how to rest

Jesus speaks about Peace and Rest in Matthew 11:25-30. He was in a situation where he faced severe trouble from the people of Galilee who did not accept him but rejected and openly ridiculed him.

Listen to what he says:

[Read Matthew 11:25-30 NRSV]

Notice that there is a beautiful parallelism in verse 28 and 29. This poetic construction simplifies the memorization of these verses.

Was it done on purpose? Because this passage was so important to the Christians of that time? Even in our time Songs have been composed based on this passage.

Listen again to the central part of the message:

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
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.

3. What is a "yoke"

One word here is the key to this passage. This is the word 'yoke' (Did I say it correctly?). 'Yoke' is a very old word and very uncommon in our daily urban lives today. Originally 'yoke' meant a device that was put on the neck of animals to control them. It then became a symbol for ruler ship or duty.

During the first century A.D. the meaning of the word 'yoke' had a wide variety of connotations:

'The yoke of government' was used to refer to the duty to the government, 'The yoke of the family' for social and family responsibilities. 'Yoke' was also used to refer to the study of the Bible, to the 'yoke' of the commandments or the Jewish Law.

The word 'yoke' was also used in a figurative way to refer to any disagreeable burden unwillingly tolerated. For example Paul uses it to refer to the enslavement by the spirits of this world when he wrote to the Galatians.

It was also used in a military or political sense. After the Romans conquered a nation they would let them pass one by one under a yoke build by their military-signs to symbolize Rome's authority over them and the duty of the conquered to Rome.

So, in what sense is the word used in our passage? It certainly means having a duty to someone or being under the authority of someone or being in servitude to something.

4. Our yoke is heavy

Our 'yoke' in this world is heavy as we saw at the beginning. We are under responsibilities for a lot of things here. We are already under a 'yoke' that is heavy to bear and that strains us in everyday life. It was astonishing for me to see how - here in Los Angeles especially - time is scarce and the duties are many. Life is so difficult here with a myriad of decisions to be made and a myriad of things that one has to take care of each day. I often wonder how students can cope with their family, their job and studying at Fuller. It is amazing to me how much stress people can bear. Are we happy in a life like that?

Life is full of duties and responsibilities. We qualify to be those who are burdened and heavily laden.

5. Jesus promises Rest

And to those Jesus promises Rest and Peace. He offers to give you relief from the burdens and the turmoil of everyday-life. In our task oriented western-culture we immediately ask: How? What do I have to do to enjoy Rest and Peace?

5.1. Coming to him

The first thing is coming to him as Jesus says here, "Come to me". Orient yourself to him and seek God. Ask in prayer for his rest. Experience the calmness of the Holy Spirit when you come before his Holy presence.

Have you ever tried to imagine God in his glory sitting on his throne and people worshipping before him? Is it possible to imagine God under pressure or not being at ease? Could God be hectic with the things he has to attend to? This is an impossible thought. When we imagine God on his throne we usually think of a very stable, very calm, very harmonious place. It is incompatible with our understanding that God could be otherwise. See him and his throne and let this picture and the feelings of peace sink into our souls and let us enjoy this presence in peace and rest in our lives.

Come to him and enjoy his presence.

5.2. Taking his yoke on us and learning from him

Jesus says "Take my yoke on you and learn from me".

What does this mean? Is this just another burden that we have to carry? Another set of responsibilities we have to take care of?

As bad as it sounds it means that we accept his authority over us and learn from him what to do with our lives. But Jesus adds "*my yoke is easy and my burden is light*". So don't be afraid, this yoke will not be too bad after all.

We are belonging to him and are serving only him. We are under his 'yoke'. We are no longer living for ourselves but we are living for him. Paul says in Galatians 2:20 (NRSV) *"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

This is another way of expressing our relationship with him. We are oriented towards him and towards what he wants us to do. Not what we want for us, but what he wants for us. We gave up our right for our own.

Therefore the items high on his priority list should be high on our priority list.

A lot of the burdens we carry here are due to our wrong priorities. Their source is our orientation to the world and not to God. There are a lot of things we think we need for ourselves but these things are really not so important for our happiness. We need to have the right priorities.

So what are the right priorities?

To sum it up roughly: Right relationships. Having good relationships in your family, having good relationships to your friends and enjoying your relationship with God.

It is not success, not being rich, not being a popular guy and not - do not tell it to anyone - graduating from Fuller Theological Seminary.

Jesus was not successful, he was not rich, he was so unpopular that they got rid of him, and he did not have a chance to attend Fuller.

The importance of relationships is emphasized again and again in Scripture - see for example the Lord's prayer - and to my surprise I found some support in contemporary Science. Let me read a part of an article in this weeks Newsweek page 37. The article was written about a survey to find out what in life makes living worthwhile and happy for the people:

[Read yellow marked part of Newsweek report on happiness p. 37]

Very surprising! What God wants to do with you through the 'yoke' and authority over you is to help you to be happy! Here is the point of him being "gentle and humble of heart", the hard edge is necessary for your own happiness.

Seek the things of Jesus and he will give you Rest. Avoid things that unnecessarily burden you and check if things you are burdened with are really important. Rest from those who are just a burden and enjoy the 'yoke' that Jesus puts on you for your own good and happiness.

5.3. He is a gentle and humble teacher

Jesus is a good teacher. He is gentle and humble. In contrast to many worldly teachers and masters Jesus is not arrogant or aloof. He is gentle and humble in heart, although he is our master. He knows better what is good for us than we do. We can trust him, trust him for all of our life and learn to be like him, gentle and humble. He promised to give us the fullness of life. In John 10:10 he says (NRSV) *"I came that they might have life and have it abundantly"*. Our own judgment in life is often wrong and will not help us to have this fullness of life. Trust him and his judgment in our life, because Jesus is a good teacher.

5.4. We will find rest for our souls

Rest and Peace develop not through our own effort, but through our relationships. Rest and Peace are coming from him down on us. We have to trust him to enjoy it. True Rest means fellowship with God. Only through this fellowship will our souls find rest. We will never be content with the things on this world. We can heap up money and insurance's and

whatever so that we might feel secure in this world. But what kind of security is this? "Security" in danger of robbery and fraud. Have you ever seen how lonely and how disoriented and how desperate the rich are?

People are made to long for God and for being in the eternal fellowship with him. This is the only way we find final security, only in him.

There is no chance of finding Rest in this world. Rest can only be found in God.

Rest not only for the time we are on this world but also after we leave.

In Revelation 14:13 the Apostle John is telling us *"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.'"*

There will be a Rest for them who die in the Lord. Rest from the deeds that we did all our lives.

6. It is impossible to understand for the wise

There is a group of people that is excluded from all of these Rests. In verse 25 Jesus talks about the wise and intelligent from whom these things are hidden.

It is impossible to enjoy the Rest and Peace unless you can trust in the superior power of Jesus to guide your life. Being wise and intelligent in your own eyes means that you are able to control your own life yourself. There is no need for a savior or a superior power to help you.

These people are of the opinion that they can cope for themselves. After all God gave humans the mind. Why not use it?

No need for trust and a relationship. Therefore those wise and intelligent in their own eyes are not able to experience the Rest and Peace of God.

7. But revealed to us in faith

But Jesus' message is so simple that it is understood by infants (V25). It was hidden from the intelligent but revealed to immature people. Christ's message is not complicated and does not require a big intellect. It is very simple. Come to him and be subject to him. This is sooooo easy and so evident that even the most uneducated and most primitive people can understand and trust in him and let him lead their lives here on this earth.

It is amazing what amount of faith can be found among simple uneducated people. The joy that they have and the Peace that is coming from them is often very surprising. May intellectual ability be more a hindrance than a help for faith and resting in Jesus?

When we read stories about Missionaries evangelizing in very simple living cultures, we find that these people do not need to read the whole Bible before they can experience the God's power. Most of these people will never be able to read the Bible. Yet they can trust in Jesus.

It is easy to understand how to rest, so that even immature children can understand it.

8. Faith in Jesus gives us rest

Faith in Jesus gives us Rest. We know that we are not perfect, that our judgment is often poor, that we fall again and again into sin and all kinds of deception. Trusting and following him means we can be sure that our lives are in good hands and not in our own with our poor judgment. Then we can rest from worrying about our life. Paul encourages us to rest in this way:

Philippians 4:6+7 *"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"*.

Faith in Jesus means letting go. Letting go of our worries how we will cope with tomorrow. Let your worries be made known to him and trust him to take care of them in the right time, so that you will have peace in your souls.

Faith gives us a new perspective, Faith in Jesus gives us Rest.

9. Come and Rest in him

There is Rest and Peace available for you in Jesus. Submit yourself to his 'yoke' and his authority. He knows what is good for you.

Come to him and experience Peace and Rest in his presence.

Come to him and learn from him how to Rest.

Come to him and learn what is first priority for your Peace.

Do not worry, coming to him is simple even children can do it.

Do not worry, coming to him means trusting your life to one who knows better than you how to handle it.

Do not worry, coming to him with your prayer means he will take care of it.

You can rest in Jesus in the midst of turmoil and of the daily stress. Come to Jesus and see things from his eternal perspective. Let him give you strength. See how much love he has for you and how he knows you.

Come to Jesus and Rest.

Appendix A: Notes on "A Critical Exegetical .. Matthew Vol II"

p. 235 A Survey of Christ's Work. Structured in three sections

2-19 in relation to that of John the Baptist

20-24 in view of his apparent failure

25-30 in view of its real success.

p. 237 A synonymous parallelism

A Come to me all you who are weary and burdened,

B and I will give you rest

A1 Take my yoke upon you

B1 and you will find rest for yourselves.

p. 238 Semitisms and Aramaic origin presumed in 25-30.

p. 272 25-30 can be subdivided into three partitions

25-26 Thanks for the revelation hidden from the wise and understanding but revealed to the babes.

27 The revealed Gnosis resides in Jesus

28-30 Invitation to come to Jesus

The immediate context is the rejection of the Gospel of John the Baptist and Jesus.

There are still the babes who perceive what is happening.

(Idea: Tie into the gut-feeling uneducated people often have and which often prove better than our educated understanding)

They argue that this Father and Son relationship is grounded in Exod 33:12-14.

Yoke seen as applying to the law given through Moses. Presentation of Jesus in Mosaic colors.

Similarities and Differences to Moses from Messiah.

p.273 Jesus does not complain about the inability of people to understand but gives praise.

apokryphic just redundant talk?

p. 274 "Heaven and Earth" rarely in Judaism but in Qumran. Contemporary expression?

p.275 "Wise and understanding" parallels in 1 Cor 1:19 and Isa 29:14. Judaism had to fight the turning of its faith into an intellectual and esoteric discipline.

p.275 "babes" petayyim at Q. Babes are the ones who are weak and simple in the eyes of the world. Before God they are elect.

Revelation only to those who are prepared to the pure in heart and poor in spirit (Job 28:28, Ps 25:18).

p. 276 religious knowledge cannot be grasped by neutral observers and those who have no thirst from the things above.

"Lowly of mind" divine truths are only revealed to the truly meek and humble. The first shall be last and the last first (Gospel of Thomas).

p.277 The knowledge of Christ is eschatological only "babes" have discerned it.

Jewish eschatological expectation of unprecedented knowledge and wisdom for the elect. Jer 31:34.

Fundamental idea for apocalyptic literature. Eschatological Gnosis to be found now in Jesus Christ. Mt 11:25-27 announces the realization of an eschatological hope.

p. 280 Idea of direct handing over the "tradition" to Jesus.

Idea in contemporary Judaism that revelation to Moses was handled by Angels.

p. 281 gnosis means "choosing". according to the Hebrew yada. They both are concerned with each other.

p. 286 Christ as a counterpart for Moses in "whose utterances one seemed to hear the speech of God himself" Josephus

p. 288 Who is suffering under a burden:

1. the burden by the Pharisees

2. Suffering by the costly demands of discipleship

3. Suffering under the weight of sin

Or simple assumption that the rest of Christ alone brings rest.

(Idea Rest in contrast to actionism)

p. 289 Peace of contentment and fullness of life coming with knowing and doing the truth as revealed by the Son of God.

Yoke = wooden frame placed on two animals to join them together. Was metaphor for obedience subordination and servitude. Common talk of Jewish Rabbis "Yoke of the Torah".

p. 290 Jesus replacement of the Torah as a full revelation of God.

Moses like Jesus was very meek (Num 12:3)

p. 291 "Learn from me" Indication of Jesus as a replacement for the Torah.

"kai euhsete avapausiv tais psuchais umon" from LXX Jer 6:16.

Verse 30 paradoxical: How can a yoke be comfortable and light?
No explanation why exactly his yoke is light.

p. 192 Because of the burdensome Pharisaic tradition?

- Yoke is easy because of the Love for God (Gen 29:20)
- The fulfillment of Jesus demands will bring future reward
- Easy because of knowledge of eschatological rest? Experience Rest while striving after a better righteousness.
- Truth can only be grasped by living it?

Appendix B: Notes on "Bibelkommentar Band 1: Matthäus"

p. 393 Strong similarity with the Gospel of John. Matthew and John belong together in a much stronger way than thought of so far.

Can be partitioned into V25-27 and V28-30.

- The Father gives rejoicing in times of trouble to the son (Idea In the same way are we rejoicing today)
- Jesus does not get hardened through the rejection he experienced but rejoices in what he just has experienced.

- Jesus continues to court Israel and offers himself as the Saviour

He was just prior rejected in Galilee. V25 is an answer to this situation.

p. 394 Jesus rejects that God could be stopped by anything.

p. 395 The enemy cannot perceive it because of their pride and unrepentance.

V26 Jesus affirms simply the authority.

p.397 V27 expression of unity between Father and Son opening up to triad.

p. 399 Don't throw all the burdens away. Don't rid yourselves of it, but Jesus says take his yoke on you and learn from him. Go the path of Jesus.

p. 400 lowly in contrast to the pride of the Pharisees.

His lordship is making someone well. It is a light burden.

Appendix C: Notes on Longenecker "Galatians"

p. 224- "Yoke" used in first century in a honourable sense for Torah study and for various kinds of government, social and family responsibilities.

Rabbi Nehuma b. Ha-Kanah 70-130 A.D.

honorable 'yoke of the kingdom' responsibilities to the kingdom

the yoke of worldly care.

Yoke of commandments.

Yoke also used in a figurative way to refer to any disagreeable burden unwillingly tolerated.

Gal 5:1 Yoke of slavery