

Pentecost 6 7/5/2026
Matthew 11:25-30 9A

“TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

As we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of our great nation this weekend, REST is very much on our minds – whether its time at the lake, the golf course, seeing family, eating a lot. But as we know, rest is not that easy to get.

I once read of a man who was driving cross country alone. After driving all night, he caught himself beginning to drift off, so he decided to stop at the next city he came to. But, his quiet place to rest happened to be in the city park right next to one of the city’s major running paths. No sooner had he settled back to snooze when there came a knocking on his window. He looked out and saw a jogger running in place.

As he rolled down the window, the jogger said, “Excuse me, sir, but I was wondering if you knew what time it was?” The man looked at the car clock and answered, "8:15". The jogger said thanks and left. The man settled back again, and was just dozing off when there was another knock on the window and another jogger.

"Excuse me, sir, do you have the time?"

"8:25!" The jogger said thanks and left.

The man could see other joggers running by and knew that it was only a matter of time before another one disturbed his rest. So, he found a piece of paper and wrote in large letters, “I don’t know what time it is” and then emphasized that with an exclamation point at the end. After putting his sign under his wiper blade, he settled in for some long-awaited rest. Just as he was dozing off, there was yet another knock on his window.

"Sir, it's 8:45!"

Today we hear Jesus say, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"*. Jesus gives us rest – not simply rest from the daily grind, not simply rest from the stress of today, but rest from the curse of sin.

We need rest because we are weary and heavy laden. Remember God's words to Adam,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return" (Ge 3:17-19).

Life in a fallen world is a hard life. No one knows that more than you, Dear Child of God.

We work hard to purchase a home, and the unsettled weather of this past month has meant we've had to spend money and energy hauling tree branches and making repairs to our castle. We work hard at our vocations only to be the one laid off or passed over for promotion. We work hard to make our marriage the blessing God wants it to be for us, only to have the desires of the sinful nature make it into a curse. We work hard to train up our children in the way of the Lord, only to have them abandon the faith for the temptations of this present age.

No matter how hard we work, we cannot avoid **hardship**. The curse on Adam and Eve goes further than just the ground being cursed and eating our bread by the sweat of our brow. Each and every one of us is all-to-aware of what it means to live in a world tainted by sin and sorrow and suffering. And it gets old, doesn't it? Life makes us weary -- sometimes physically, sometimes spiritually.

Add to that, our burden. We are burdened with a yoke of sin. A yoke is a primitive farming implement – a bar of wood laid across the shoulders of the oxen, so that the oxen can plow the fields. A yoke is heavy. An ox can handle it, but for a human to shoulder a yoke would not just be difficult; it would be impossible. Such is our yoke of sin. It is a burden impossible for us to bear.

Sometimes, we are particularly burdened by a particular sin. One that troubles you; nags at your conscience; something that makes you wonder if God can really forgive – your struggle with alcohol, pornography, gossip, your hatred for your cousin because she got grandma's doily. And, Dear Child of God, you know what a burden that is. Like carrying around a wooden beam on your shoulders and you are not strong enough to bear it.

We are weak; we are worn out. Paul says it so well in our Epistle, *I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing (Ro 7:15, 19).*

Jesus says, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* He offers rest, and He says, "take my yoke upon you". Jesus brings a different yoke – a yoke that is not a burden – in fact, rather than weighing us down, it lifts us up!

Rejoice and be glad, for Jesus humbled Himself to be born of a virgin to take all the burdens you bear upon Himself and carried the burden of the cross all the way to Calvary, where He suffered and died for you, for your sin, so that you have the forgiveness of all your sins. Isaiah the Prophet says it this way, *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (Is 53:4)*. Only Jesus can give us rest because only the Son of God has removed the curse of sin and death from us.

And the 3rd day He rose again from the dead to give you His easy and light yoke in your Baptism. There, in the washing of regeneration and the washing of rebirth, He re-creates you so that you are able to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. And He continues to do His work in you, giving you rest.

In the Old Testament, Saturday, the 7th day, was the Sabbath day. This, the 7th day, was the day of creation on which God rested. After all the work of creating light, land and sea, fish, birds, land animals, and human beings – God decided to rest. It was not because He was “stressed out” or physically exhausted. As with everything God does, He does it for his people. *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,”* Jesus said (Mk 2:27).

But, Jesus came teaching the truth: He is Lord of the Sabbath. He is our rest. He removes our burden. When God created our world, He did so knowing he would one day send his Son to redeem it. The book of Colossians tells us that festivals and Sabbaths were “a shadow of the things...to come” and that “the reality ... is found in Christ” (cf. 2:17).

In other words, Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, is our Sabbath rest. Our Sabbath -- which by the way, means “rest,” -- is no longer a day of the week. Our Sabbath is now a person – Jesus Himself. We find our

best and truest rest in Him – rest for the soul.

The 3rd Commandment, to remember the Sabbath day, does not bind us to worship on a certain day of the week, but binds us to Christ, who is our rest. We worship on Sunday because that is the day Jesus rose from the day, bringing life and immortality to light. Every Sunday, as you have heard me say, is a “mini-Easter”. Every Sunday reminds us the Sabbath rest of heaven, where we will rest from all of our earthly struggles (cf. Re 14:13).

Wherever and whenever the Word of the Gospel is taught, proclaimed, shared, there Jesus’ invitation is offered and true, “come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”. In Jesus, we find rest for our souls.

Every time we gather for worship, we hear His word proclaimed and we are rejuvenated. We remember His promise each time we recall our baptism and know our guilt is washed away. We receive rest, recuperation, and more – when we come to His altar to eat and to drink His body and blood, our load of sin is lifted and we are strengthened.

St. Augustine once said, “Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till the find rest in Thee.” Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, who came to give us rest, rest from our sins, rests for our souls.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.