

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
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Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus Offers Rest

Hymns: *As The Deer* – 338

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Closing: 250

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

It is the simplest of rules. It is written on the concrete beside almost every pool that I have ever seen. It is shouted by every guard on duty. “No running!” And it appeals to every bit of common sense, doesn’t it? Concrete is hard, concrete is rough and when concrete is wet, it becomes very slippery. Those three truths make “No running” into quite a logical piece of advice. But why is it that often the simplest advice is the hardest to follow? As much as it is a rule that wet concrete is slippery, it is also a rule that kids want to run when water awaits. And so those two words that are painted in block letters all over the concrete are passed by in a blur. And because of that, the inevitable often happens: the corner is taken a little too tightly, the feet launch into the air, the concrete remains very hard and tears ensue. If only that little bit of advice were followed; an easy solution given to every pool-goer, “No running!” The simplest advice, yet so hard to follow.

Today, as we look at Jesus’ words in Matthew 11, we are going to see how that truth applies to a very common problem. And as we begin, I’d like you to think about this question, if you had to name one problem that affects the greatest number of people, what would it be? (Take a few moments to think about it) For me, it would have to be worry. Is there a single one of us who doesn’t worry at all? Maybe a better question would be, “Is there a single one of us who doesn’t worry a ton?” You might know people who you would label as care-free, but I bet even in their heads there are things that they worry about. Why is that?

The Bible tells us that it is because every single person is born with something that he has to worry about. Every single person is born with original sin and original sin quickly turns into actual

sin and actual sin creates a sense of guilt. And that guilt makes every person worry on some level about who they are going to have to answer to and what the punishment is going to be.

So, every person is born with a natural reason to worry and once we start worrying, we don’t really stop. We worry about health, we worry about family and friends, we worry about jobs and money. If those big things are doing okay, we find other things to worry about. We worry about clothes, we worry about cars, we worry about homes. If those are okay, then it turns to even smaller things. And then, we even bring our worry to church. We worry about budgets. We worry about getting the Word out. We worry about who isn’t here and we even sometimes worry about who is. Worry, worry, worry! There is always something that we can use to worry.

The troubling part is the way in which we go about trying to solve all this worrying? We sit down and we come up with answers to the problems. We think and we analyze and we plan until our solution is just right. We figure out ways that we can make it work. We put the burden on our shoulders. If we do this and this and this, we’ll be okay. If this falls into place and that happens like we want it to, our plan will work just like we cooked it up.

But there is one big problem with that series of solutions. Did you hear what it was? There were a lot of 1st person pronouns littered throughout those answers. When we come up with answers, the solutions are often hatched according to our plans and desires. They take into account what we are able to do and then they take a lot of work from us just to have any hope of success.

And that does not have a positive impact on the worry and stress that we are trying to find relief from. When it comes down to it, the solutions that we often come up with to relieve the worry and stress really just add more worry and stress. We come up with a solution and then we have to fret about whether the variables will come together and work just like we imagined. It is an endless cycle. It is a difficult cycle, one that wears on us and drags us down and wipes us out. Our brains are always moving, always plotting, keeping us up at night and keeping us busy during the day.

The thing is, there is a simple solution available to solve it all, a simple piece of advice that we all have heard and yet, we find it so difficult to follow. **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”** They are beautiful words from Jesus, aren’t they? Words that can’t run through our heads enough; words of invitation and words that promise to give us what we so desperately need. Those words of advice can be boiled down to three words which tell us everything

we need to know. “All” – “Come” – “Rest.” From those three words, we can find all that we need. The first thing we need to be reminded of is that there isn’t a person around whose Jesus’ words are not for. One of the great things about Greek, the language of the NT, is that it is usually pretty easy to know what was most important in the author’s mind. It is easy because the most important words go first. As Jesus gives address to his invitation, he stresses “all.” “Come to me, everyone.” “Come to me, all.” And then he describes those “everyones.” They are weary, tired from their work, tired from their worries, burned out emotionally; and they are burdened, weighed down like a boat carrying a heavy load.

It is easy to see how those words applied to all the people of Jesus’ day. Physically, the people of Israel were tired of foreign rule under the Roman Empire. Though it was not terribly difficult, they surely spent a lot of time worrying about God’s promise of restoration and when it was going to come. More than that though, all the people of Israel were spiritually burdened. They had that natural guilt that we talked about before. In addition, the Pharisees and teachers of the law added to their burdens with their many, many extra laws and commands. It would’ve been a burden trying to learn them all, let alone trying to obey them. And the expectation of perfect obedience is what the people were weighed down with. Jesus knew the people he was speaking to and he still does. Though the demands are different for us, the burdens produce the same effects. Lasting guilt of missteps or missed opportunities. All those areas of worry and all those plans continually weigh us down. We all feel those weights in life and Jesus speaks to us personally.

And to all, he brings the simplest of invitations, “Come!” “Come to me,” are the Savior’s words. Whatever burdens and worries we have, the search for solutions and answers should take us all to the same place every time. The true answers are found in Jesus and Jesus is found in the Word of God. It is the only place we ever need to go to find the answer to any problem that we face. Jesus has it and he has invited, more than that, he has advised us to come to him.

However, that is really where the problem lies, isn’t it? The invitation to come to Jesus for the solution is what we have difficulty with, especially when it sounds so simple and, quite honestly, generic. For people who are prideful and smart and used to coming up with their own solutions, simply placing our lives in someone else’s hands is next to impossible, even when we know that someone else is God Almighty. Even as we say, “It’s all in God’s hands,” or “We just have to let God take care of it,” do we ever really give up the worry? Or do we

continue to wonder how this is all going to work out? Do we analyze saying, “How is God going to use this,” or “Where is he getting me to go?”

Jesus tells us that he knows those struggles. That is why he refers to it the way he does as he says, **“Take my yoke upon you.”** The yoke was the piece of equipment used to drive animals through a day of labor in the fields. The difficulty of the labor depended totally on the farmer who controlled the yoke. But no matter what, the yoke meant burden. When Jesus tells people who are yoked with heavy burdens that the solution lies in another yoke, alarms go off. We are trying to get rid of our burdens, not replace them. But this jump to full reliance on someone else is only a temporary burden Jesus says. Jesus has given the promise that this yoke is easy and light. As it turns out, it isn’t a burden at all, because of what Jesus truly offers.

He brings rest! And the rest that Jesus brings is different because it goes straight to the heart of the problem. Worry and burdens are caused by sin and sin most devastatingly affects the soul. Jesus’ solution brings rest to the soul. He offers a solution that takes our sins away. It is found in his sacrificial work. Once sin is removed, the guilt also dissipates, it goes away. When the guilt that troubles our souls is gone, it takes away the worry about our eternal life. When cares about our eternity are taken care of, we don’t really need to worry about our temporal life. As Jesus promises rest for our soul, he gives a solution that takes care of every problem.

All, come, rest. It is the simplest of advice. Yet, it is really all we ever need to hear. Let it be a consistent reminder that rings in your life. Something you remember each day as you rise to face life and something you turn to each night as you put the cares of life to rest. Jesus takes our burdens of worry and stress; in their place, he gives peace and joy. Amen.