

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, August 1, 2021
Scripture: Matthew 11: 28-30

Sermon: Finding Rest For Your Soul

I'm exhausted... I'm stressed to the limit...I'm bone tired... I feel drained... I'm running on fumes...I'm on the edge of burnout.

Have you ever heard yourself or someone else say those words? At one time or another most of us have been there. Last week we talked about giving our worries and our burdens to God and letting God carry them for us. This week we are taking it a step further and looking at Matthew 11 and how we need to find rest for our soul in God. It is an invitation for all who labor and are heavy laden with the trials of life.

Listen to Matthew 11: 28-30 again, "Come to Me all who toil and are 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."

Our bodies are tired. About 70 million Americans aren't sleeping enough and have insomnia. All age groups are affected by it. It causes 38,000 deaths each year and costs the USA \$70 billion worth of productivity. Teenagers suffer from it and studies show that 64 percent of teens blame lack of sleep for their poor school performance.

Our society works hard. There is money to be made; degrees to be earned; ladders to be climbed. Isn't busyness next to godliness? In 1910 Americans slept nine hours a night; today we sleep seven or less and are proud of it. Thomas Edison claimed he could live on fifteen-minute naps while Albert Einstein averaged 11 hours of sleep a night. Our minds are tired, and our bodies are tired, and I believe our souls are tired.

We live in a fast-paced world where we are often over-achievers, hurrying, rushing, working too hard until our energies are depleted, and we feel overwhelmed with life, and it is difficult to rest.

Welcome to church this morning. This is a place for tired, weary people. Jesus gives us a clear invitation and a promise: “Come to me, you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The Sabbath Day God gave us as a day of rest to sit in his presence, to worship him and to be refreshed.

The Statue of Liberty in NY Harbor has the inscription from Emma Lazarus: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Those words echo Jesus’ invitation to “Come.” Many come to church stressed and worried, troubled and tired.

What is one thing we can do when we are faced with trouble after trouble and we’re feeling overwhelmed? Just “Breathe.” We all need to exhale the anxieties, worries, and stress in our life and inhale the healing power of God.

There is a contemporary Christian song entitled: “Breathe” by Jonny Diaz. Listen to his words:

“Alarm clock screaming bare feet hit the floor
It’s off to the races everybody out the door
I’m feeling like I’m falling behind, it’s a crazy life
Ninety miles an hour going fast as I can
Trying to push a little harder trying to get the upper hand
So much to do in so little time, it’s a crazy life
It’s ready, set, go. It’s another wild day
When the stress is on the rise in my heart I feel you say just
 Breathe, just breathe
 Come and rest at my feet
 And be, just be
Chaos calls but all you really need
Is to just breathe
Third cup of joe just to get me through the day

Want to make the most of time but I feel it slips away
I wonder if there's something more to this crazy life
I'm busy, busy, busy, and it's no surprise to see
That I only have time for me, me, me
There's gotta be something more to this crazy life
I'm hanging on tight to another wild day
When it starts to fall apart in my heart I hear you say just
 Breathe, just breathe
 Come and rest at my feet
 And be, just be
 Chaos call but all you really need
Is to take it in, fill your lungs
The peace of God that overcomes
Just breathe, just breathe
Let your weary spirit rest
Lay down what's good and find what's best
Just breathe, just breathe
Come and rest at my feet
And be, just be
Just breathe

Jesus understands our needs. He knew the importance of rest and a time to replenish his tired soul. People were always crowding around him and they wanted healing, forgiveness, courage, hope and life. When Jesus felt his energy leaving him, Jesus would go away to a lonely place to pray—to be in solitude and to rest.

The song "Breathe" talks about resting at the feet of Jesus. Does that remind you of a scripture passage? It is from Luke 10 when Jesus visited Mary and Martha. Martha was busy in the kitchen preparing the dinner and Mary her sister was resting at the feet of Jesus. Martha was very upset with her sister and said to Jesus, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many

things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” Mary chose what is better...sitting at Jesus’ feet...in His presence...at rest.

We need to ask ourselves. What is essential and what is periphery? What is necessary for now and what can wait for later? What is crowding Jesus out of my heart causing unrest?

In our passage this morning, Jesus is inviting all of us, the tired and weary, to come to him. We are a people who are exhausted because we do things on our own strength.

Jesus is calling us to find rest in him. He promises relief and refreshment for our souls but Jesus does not promise a rest from work. In the next verse Jesus invites us to take his yoke. What does that mean? “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me”.

A yoke is a farming implement that joins two animals, such as oxen, together so that the animals can share the workload evenly and become more productive. Sometimes, an older, more experienced animal is yoked with a younger, less experienced animal, so that the older animal can train the younger animal while they work together.

By using this illustration of a yoke, Jesus is asking us to share and be partners with him in his work, in his ministry and service. He will be there to train us and help us, because when you work together, the burden is lighter. Jesus wants us to come to him and learn from him in a relationship. He will equip us, teach us, and guide us to be effective in life and service, if we allow him.

In communion with him, he promises that we will find rest and refreshment for our souls. Jesus is gentle and humble in heart and wants the best for us because he loves us and cares for us.

The yoke that Jesus gives us is easy. It is easy because Jesus shares it with us. It is easy because it is productive and useful. It is easy because it is correct and life-giving. The yoke is custom-fitted for us. If we work with Jesus close to us, sharing the load, and doing things in his timing and in his strength, then our work will not become tiresome or burdensome, and in our resting, we will be renewed.

Isaiah 40: 29-31 tells us that God our Creator will not grow tired or weary, and “he gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Come to the Lord’s Table today asking God to give rest to your soul for his yoke is easy and his burden is light.