

## 'He Will give you rest' -Sunday 12th Feb 2023 -Christchurch and St. John's

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. <sup>26</sup> Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

<sup>27</sup> "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In this reading today Jesus drops a couple of bombshells and then some gentle encouragement. You can find the passage, Matthew 11:25-30, on page ?? of your pew bibles.

### **Prayer:**

**Bombshell 1:** Stop trying to be clever! By all means we should learn, pass exams, gain skills and perhaps become an intellectual giant (like me!?) but do not fall into the trap of intellectual pride! From there a feeling of superiority and elitism is not far away. Soon after comes the worship of self and the corruption of the soul.

The Gospel lives in the heart more than the head and some people are so clever that they miss it altogether. But the humility of a child, the childlike approach to faith, can pick up the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven that the clever miss.

For instance the bishops of the C of E seem to think that they use clever legalese and semantics to show that gay marriage and civil partnerships are wrong but they should be celebrated and blessed. That 'As I say, we believe that stable, faithful, committed, loving relationships are good. They are the place for physical intimacy...'

-no matter what type of relationship? What could cause church leaders to ignore core teaching in scripture, throw out the inherited faith and wisdom of centuries and come up with their own temporary and malleable theologies if not **intellectual pride?**

But the 'humility of orthodoxy' states that you sit under the inherited belief and scriptural understanding of those who went before you until such times as you are convinced, through evidence, that they were wrong and you are right.

Einstein, who was an intellectual giant, got this right. When pondering the mystery of the universe he said that we should approach it like a child:

'...little child entering a huge library, whose walls are covered to the ceiling with books in many different languages. The child knows that someone must have written those books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books, a mysterious order, which it does not comprehend but only dimly suspects.'

The story is told of the young boy, sitting in school class being taught by a fireman what to do to get out of the school or house safely in the event of a fire. The fireman called it the 'life plan'. At the end of the teaching he asked the class, to check their learning, 'what is your life plan'? A little boy put up his hand and said 'The Cross.' (True story!).

The fireman was thinking only of physical life, the boy thought about eternal life.  
Don't be clever.

**Bombshell 2:** Jesus and the Father are one and there is no getting to God, gaining salvation, heaven etc *any other way*. All of our eggs are in one basket. Good works won't do it, reason won't do it, good religion won't do it. Nothing but the blood of Jesus has conquered death and salvation is through Christ alone.

God is his grace and mercy may save those that have never heard (much evidence for this) the gospel, never mind had a chance to reject it. **But** there is only one way to God, through Jesus Christ:

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6*  
Peter puts maybe even better in Acts 4: <sup>12</sup> *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

There is no argument here. Believe something else if you like, but it is not of Christ.

**Then** <sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

As if Jesus is saying 'this is hard and I'm not going to spoil you... but see what's in store for those that come to me.'

### **Rest and renewal:**

**Rest:** For body mind and soul.

When God created the heavens and the earth he was pretty busy -The Andromeda galaxy alone is a pin prick in the sky -and in that piece of light there are a trillion stars. So in Genesis chapter 1 he seems to be working fairly hard! Then in genesis chapter 2:

- 1. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*

God wasn't tired. He rested to enjoy His creation, spend time with us and teach us how to rest as well. We can get tired, exhausted and weary. We can become weighed down by the responsibilities of work, family and pressure. We can feel like there aren't enough hours in the day.

And God says... rest, reconnect with me, stop for a moment or 50, take your mind off the waves and the storms and focus on me. Make your relationship with me first and everything will fall into place from there. In Exodus 20 God gives us 10 commandments and the first 3 are on the importance of God (No other gods, no idols, don't misuse). The 4<sup>th</sup> one is this:

*"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labour and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work..."*

This was instituted to help us have time to concentrate on God -not to have another day of rules and worship feeling like work -but rest in God. Holidays were started by churches as 'holy-days' -so that we could thank God, think about God and have some time off -so don't say the churches doesn't do anything for you! Mark 2: 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'

In 1 Kings 19 the prophet Elijah has a great victory over the prophets of Baal and rain returns to the famine ravaged land. He is on a high and rightly so. But Jezebel (who sponsored the prophets of Baal) swears to kill and he flees for his life. Hiding under a tree in the wilderness he gives up:

*“I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”<sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.*

*All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”<sup>6</sup> He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.’*

So rest. It’s not just permitted, it’s commanded. Every hour doing something outside of God’s will is a wasted hour. I don’t know when you should rest and when you should work. I don’t know *how* you should rest either. Read a book, fall asleep, take a walk, pray, praise, spend time with people. Whatever you do, do it before the Lord, to his praise and rest. Sundays are given to help this -10 commandments - give God his place, *work for him, rest in him.*

### **Rest...and renewal:**

*‘Take my yoke upon you... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’*

The yoke is a wooden structure used for oxen and cattle. It was also used as a terminology for how slaves or prisoners were kept. Put those images away. This isn’t the image of a master and worker but a father and child.

The ‘yoke’ was the terminology of a disciple -a person who attached themselves to and submitted to a rabbi to learn from them -it took the imagery of the wooden yoke but made it something special. Jesus is saying to each one of us:

Submit to me. Give me your life. Don’t be full of pride. Don’t be a slave to the world but a servant to me.

**Because** ‘...I am gently and humble of heart’ -I will also serve you, I will be your Brother as God is our Father. I, the Lord, am humble and gentle and you will feel the power of patience in your life.

Maybe this morning you are struggling with weariness and pressure. Maybe you don’t know what it is to cast your burdens, and life, to Jesus. Come and be prayed with. Or at least take a moment today to come to Christ

...and know that one day, our rest will be eternal, a rest for our souls.