Sermon on Matthew 11 – No Rest For The Weary?

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. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. “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. “Come to me, all you who are weary and 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.”

The year was 1924 and loaves of bread were sliced and packaged for the first time. It was hailed as one of the greatest forward steps in the baking industry. Such a revolutionary change that it has since become the benchmark by which other inventions are judged. “The greatest thing since sliced bread!” Fast forward about 80 years to a recent program on the History Channel featuring the top 101 gadgets of all time. Coming in at number 10 was the light bulb. Coming in at number 5 was the personal computer. Coming in at number 3 was the television. Coming in at number 2 was the radio. Any guesses as to what came in at number one? The Smartphone! This combination of cell phone and personal computer gives people access to the internet along with the ability to read and send emails, pictures, and documents. With countless apps in the areas of personal, social, and business matters, one might wonder how we ever functioned without them! Have you ever wondered why some of the things that are supposed to make life easier actually make life busier? With work and family and so many other obligations and responsibilities in our lives, sometimes it seems like there’s no rest for the weary.

Jesus and his disciples understood this. Back in the days before Smartphones, their work involved traveling on foot from town to town to talk with people and share God’s Word with them. Sometimes it kept them so busy that they didn’t have time to eat! On one occasion Jesus told his disciples, “come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” They tried to escape by boat to the other side of the lake only to meet people who had run around the lake to meet them at the other side. But when Jesus landed and saw the crowds, “he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.” Yes, the one who really could have used some rest put the needs of others before his own, teaching them, giving them the rest that could only be found in His Word.

Ministry was in full swing for Jesus and his disciples. After sending out the Twelve to preach and teach, Jesus continued to do the same. Unfortunately many people saw Jesus like the circus or carnival coming to town. Someone who performed miracles and entertained people rather than the Promised Messiah. In the section before our text, Jesus pronounced judgment on several cities because they rejected him as the Promised Messiah. In the section after our text, Jesus dealt with criticism from religious leaders because he healed a man on the Sabbath. Sometimes it seemed like he just couldn’t win! Ever feel that way? Well-thought out plans that didn’t pan out? People who didn’t want to listen? Hard work and effort that went unnoticed or unappreciated? It can be easy to get frustrated and give up. It can be easy to lash out at others in anger. Reactions like these are common among sinful human beings like you and me, but not Jesus. Did you notice how Jesus reacted to everything that was going on in his busy life? He took the time to praise God for some of the neat things that were happening as a result of His Word. He 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. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”

It’s been said that the greatest distance in the world isn’t a matter of miles; it’s only a matter of inches. The inches between the human head and heart. Spiritually speaking, it’s a road that only the Holy Spirit can travel. The “wise and learned” of this world often try to place roadblocks along this road by placing human logic and reason over the simple truths of God’s Word. How often don’t we become the “wise and learned” of this world by putting our will before God’s? People often take time for anything and everything in life, but little time for the one thing needed. People look for rest and relaxation in the pleasures and treasures of this world rather than the pleasure and treasure of God’s Word.

Some will say that gadgets like radios, and televisions, and computers, and Smartphones have changed life for the better! VCR’s were followed by DVR’s that enable us to record our favorite shows so that we can catch up on what we’ve missed while we were busy doing other things. Bane or Blessing? Convenience or curse? If a convenience tears us away from time in God’s Word, that convenience can become a curse. If the convenience of technology that enables us to stay in touch with old friends becomes an opportunity for gossip, that convenience can become a curse.
Sins like these make us deserving of the ultimate curse of an eternity in hell where there is no rest for the weary, no rest for the wicked, only weeping and gnashing of teeth and eternal separation from God.

Does the guilt and shame of your sins weigh on your shoulders like a burden too heavy to bear? “Come to me,” Jesus says, “and I will give you rest.” Do the trials and tribulations and “busyness” of life make you feel weary? “Come to me,” Jesus says, “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 the times we’ve been yoked together with the pleasures and treasures of the world, we can be thankful that Jesus was yoked together with the perfect will of his Heavenly Father. For the times we’ve lashed out at others in anger and frustration, we can be thankful that Jesus was gentle and humble in heart. For the times creature comforts and modern conveniences have gotten in the way of time spending time in God’s Word, may we continue to look to Jesus. Look to the weary One carrying his cross to a hill called Golgotha. Look to the burdened One carrying your sins on his shoulders. There would be no rest for the weary until his mission was accomplished. As the hours passed; as strength grew weak; as blood, sweat, and tears flowed freely, he would close his eyes in death. His long days were over. His work was complete. Finished was the power of the devil and the yoke of sin and death that once enslaved us. Committing his spirit into the hands of his Heavenly Father, he closed his eyes in peace. His body was laid to rest in a tomb. Three days later he arose to proclaim the victory he had won. The victory that gives us rest found in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. Along with this victory comes the promise of yet another victory celebration, the day when we will be with Jesus and all believers for all eternity in heaven!

And to think that this eternal victory celebration was planned for you by your Heavenly Father from eternity! In our text Jesus tells us, “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.” How amazing to know that God chose to reveal himself to you! How awesome to know that God chose you to be his own dear child! Working through Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit brought you to faith and continues to strengthen your faith through these very same means! In Jesus you have the rest that so often escapes the wise and learned of this world. “Hidden…from the wise and learned” and “revealed… to little children” which is why Jesus tells us, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these…I tell you the truth whoever will not enter the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” May God give us a childlike faith that treasures the beautiful and simple truths of His Word that gives us the rest we need the most.

During these beautiful summer months, I often dream about being able to relax in a hammock in my backyard with a cold glass of lemonade looking up into the sky and watching the clouds go by. As my children play peacefully and quietly in the yard, I close my eyes and rest. Maybe you have other thoughts that come to your mind when you think about peaceful rest? In our text Jesus wants us to think of rest as being yoked with him. Being yoked with Jesus?!?! That sounds like more work than rest! Yokes were farm implements that tied two animals together and put them to work out in the fields. Keep the yoke; I’d rather have the hammock! Until you realize what being yoked with Jesus means and the blessings that belong to us through this special relationship. Jesus tells us, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” How can Jesus call his yoke easy and light when the burdens of life seem so overwhelming and exhausting at times? They’re easy…because when it comes to what truly matters in life, Jesus has already done all the work for us. They’re light…because in view of the heavy work he’s already done, we enjoy the relatively light work of letting our light shine, carrying our cross, serving our Savior in all we say and do. “Easy and light,” because we know whom we are yoked with. Being yoked with Jesus enables us to tackle the challenges of each day knowing that he goes with us every step of the way. Being yoked with Jesus enables us to handle the hardships and difficulties, the pain and persecution, the exhausting days of life knowing that he promises to use them for our good as he guides and directs us along the road that leads to our heavenly home. We live in a fast-paced world filled with gadgets and gizmos galore to the point where it seems like there’s no rest for the weary. **No Rest For The Weary?** Actually there is, but it can only be found in Jesus. Take time for him. Make time for him by spending time with him in His Word.

**Amen.**