

July 9, 2023

Matthew 11:25-30:

“To Give Our Souls Rest”

- I. Who Are the Wise and Understanding?
- II. Only the Chosen.
- III. Rest for Your Soul.

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St. Matthew 11:25-30

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some might think they've heard these words more than enough: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (Ps. 139:16)." Maybe some are a bit bored with, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps (Prov. 16:9)." How about this: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning (Is. 46:9b,10a)"? And this one: "A man's steps are from the Lord; how then can a man understand his way (Prov. 20:24)." And I hope you don't mind one more: "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23)."

I did not determine the day of my birth or death. I own nothing of this world. All my "stuff" isn't mine and can be taken away in a moment. I did not determine what I would do in life, the steps I would take to get there, the woman I would marry, the son given to me, the place where I would live, the congregation I would serve, whether or not I would be standing before you at this moment, or will see you again after today. I don't know if any of the plans I have made will be fulfilled. All I know is what has been revealed to me from the eternal Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word; the Scripture. Seriously, "it is not in man...to direct his steps."

This world rides a harrowing roller coaster of ups and downs. Its acclaimed wisdom and understanding have never moved it and will never move it beyond conflict and grave. Depressing? A sin against "the power of positive thinking"? A slap at self-esteem? Consider the past 5,000 years or so. Consider what's happening. Consider...whatever. So, let's try to get it straight in our hearts and minds: God sent His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

TO GIVE OUR SOULS REST

I. Who Are the Wise and Understanding?

Our text begins, "At that time Jesus declared, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will (vv.25,26).'" So the question is: Who are the *little children*? Listen to this:

...the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like *little children*, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18:1-4).

The question is, "What does it mean for a person to humble one's self like a child?" The root meaning of the word "humble" comes from the Latin word "humus" which means "of the earth." It has been noted that "To be humble is to be face down in the dirt, submitting to the authority of another without personal pride." James writes "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you (Jms. 4:10)." Little children believe and will submit. Scriptures inform us, "Now they (parents) were bringing even infants to him that He might touch (bless) them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them." You know, don't bother Jesus with the little ones until they can understand, or until they reach an age of accountability. "But Jesus called them to him, saying, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it (Lk. 18:15-18).'"

Who are the little children? Everyone who humbles himself and herself to the truth that we are neither worthy nor deserving of God's love; everyone who cries out, as David did: "Have mercy on me, O God...For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...(Ps. 51:1,34)." Every sin we commit is first and foremost, eternally a sin against God. And the comfort is this: "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite

spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Ps. 51:17).” This is the wisdom of God; the wisdom that draws us to Christ who gave Himself to pay for our massive crimes of sin against God. Jesus had to be Man because man sinned against God. He had to be God because only God could pay for the insurmountable sins of all humanity. Only God could “so love the world”. And that brings us to these words of our text. . .

II. Only the Chosen.

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (vv. 27-29).”

God chooses whom He will choose. And how do we understand that? I have two statements that were written by the familiar commentator, P.E. Kretzmann. They’re a bit lengthy but worthy of our hearing. First this:

These things, the mysteries of the kingdom of God, are hidden from those that are wise in their own conceit, that believe themselves to be above the eternal revelations of God’s wisdom in His Word (their conceit). To them (the conceited) the Gospel is hidden, because they deliberately close their hearts and minds against its beauties (just remember where this world’s wisdom has and is taking this world). (Paul E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Vol. I, St. Louis, Mo., Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis Mo., Fifth Printing, p. 56.)

So, you’re sitting there and I’m standing here and God’s Word informs us that “(God) chose us in him before the foundation of the world (before creation), that we should be made holy and blameless before him (Eph. 1:4).” We didn’t make a decision about Jesus. He made the decision about us. Or, as Scriptures impress on us, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).” Knowing Jesus and trusting in Him for forgiveness and eternal life is the greatest miracle you and I could ever receive in this world.

The point is this: We cannot allow the conceit - the wisdom - of this world to persuade the church (you and me) to alter God’s Word to agree with the world’s thinking on issues that are in serious conflict with God’s Word; conflicts that have resulted in horrible consequences. This world’s conceit has no room for the confession: “I a poor miserable sinner.” We must hold to God’s Word because, as it states, “For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness...(I Cor.3:19).” Hopefully, the worldwide sound of the trumpet comes soon!

We know that worship is always about what God wants us to receive through the Means He has chosen; the Word and Sacraments. It’s about eternal life and the call to place our trust in Him. And that takes us to this . . .

III. Rest for Your Soul.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (vv.28-30).”

Everyone here struggles with sin and is often heavy laden, burdened with assorted guilt; fearful of decisions that were made or have to be made; wondering what tomorrow will bring. And we’re always searching for that happy place. Here’s the second quote from Kretzmann:

Full of both authority and kindness is His call, going out to the fatigued and the burdened, to the poor sinners whose weight of transgressions is bowing them to the earth, who can find no solace or relief in all the wide world.... Instead of this load, which is bound to drag them down to everlasting damnation, Christ will supply another, a far different burden...it is His yoke, the yoke of the cross, which the Christians must bear in this world, as followers of Him that bore His cross for our sake...The burden of Christian obligation is kindly to bear, it is light to stand up under; there is nothing grievous or oppressive about it because in the final analysis (and please hear this), He bears both us and our burdens in love; He gives rest unto our souls, such rest, such complete satisfaction as comes through the knowledge of the Savior and His complete redemption...(Kretzmann, New Testament, Vol. I., p.65).

The mess of this world's sin is everywhere, everyday. But listen: God is constantly directing to what has been given us in Christ. It's not here. It's this, from the Word and the Word alone:

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient (passing away), but the things unseen (the joy and love and life of God in Christ) are eternal (2 Cor.4:16-18).”

You see, He came to give our souls rest - forever. Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott