

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, our God offers us something important... something every single one of desperately needs. God tells us where we can find true rest. You may have come to church today expecting the only rest you would receive would be that rest you get when your eyes close for a bit during the sermon. But no! There is a much better rest for you today. You're not going to want to miss it.

Jesus invites to himself those who are weary and burdened. If you're not weary and burdened, the invitation of Jesus is not to you. There are different types of weariness, aren't there? If you put in a long work-week and have to work overtime, you are probably ready for some rest. You are weary. So does Jesus offer rest to the overworked?

Sometimes we or a loved one have health problems that are serious. They weigh heavy on us. They are a burden. Does Jesus offer rest to the sick?

Sometimes we have a hard time making our budget. There's more money going out than coming in, and we can't seem to get on top of it. The stress wears you out. Does Jesus offer rest to those financially stressed?

Or how about the times when you have a conflict with someone you love. They get mad at you. You get mad at them. If an argument like that happens right before bed, you can't sleep can you? If it happens right before work, you can't concentrate all day. Conflicts in our relationships with others wear us out. Does Jesus offer rest from this?

Sometimes we must deal with the death of a loved one. Some day we will face our own death. It's emotionally draining. It's so hard. It wears you out. Is it to the dying Jesus offers his rest?

In answer to all of these questions, I would say, well, yes. But every one of these things I mentioned are actually a secondary weariness we experience because of secondary causes. Here's what I mean: Imagine you are running in a marathon. (For some of us that will much harder to imagine than for others of us. When the finish line is in sight, you pour out the last bit of energy left in you and run fast to the end. You collapse with exhaustion after you cross the finish line. Someone comes up to you and says, "How are you feeling?" You exclaim, "That last 50 yards just wiped me out!" While that's true, isn't the whole story that the previous 26 miles were perhaps the true cause of feeling wiped out?

So I would suggest to you that relationship problems, financial problems, health problems... even facing death... these are all secondary and small-picture causes of weariness we might be feeling right now. But they are not the primary or "big-picture" cause of weariness.

There is something behind this all... under this all. There is something bigger that we may not see or fully acknowledge that is causing us to be weary and burdened. The underlying cause is: sin. We're carrying around this huge load of sin and guilt that weighs heavy on our hearts and minds.

In fact try to picture the load of sin visually. Imagine a very large potato sack. But this isn't a potato sack, it's a sin sack. Every one of your sins is a rock. And you carry the guilt of it around with you. You doubted God and trusted self. There's a big rock in your bag. You cursed or swore, using God's name in vain. Rock. You skipped church and slept in. Rock. You mouthed back at your mom or dad. Rock. You abused alcohol or overate. Rock. You looked at

pornography. Rock. You took some office supplies home from work. Rock. You spread a bad rumor about someone. Rock. You weren't satisfied with what God has given you, and you desired what others have: rock. You were lazy, unhelpful, selfish, rude, impatient, passing the buck, said hurtful words... rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock. How big is the sin sack that you're hauling around? How heavy is your burden? People frequently go through life assuming they must carry that heavy burden. They did the wrong thing, now they must bear the consequences for the rest of their lives. How would it feel to unload that burden and live guilt free? Is it possible? Many assume not. To remove the sin sack, *we must know how*. Listen to what Jesus says:

²⁵ Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things [the truths that bring true rest] from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

To remove the guilt of our sins, we must know how. It must be revealed. The rest we seek is hidden from many. The rest we seek is not found where people think. The wise and learned people will tell you that relief from your burden of guilt is found in yourself. Do more. Try new techniques. Change yourself. Grow more. You can do it! People who listen to the "wise and learned" only end up bearing a heavier burden! Our sinful nature cannot get rid of the rocks... only add new ones.

Instead the truths that reveal the secret to unloading our burden are something revealed by God himself. And they are revealed to people who acknowledge they don't have the answers and they depend on the heavenly Father. Jesus calls such people, "little children." Don't be an adult, be a child when it comes to God!

Sounds strange, doesn't it? Don't we usually tell people, "Would you stop acting like a child! Would you just grow up!" But God says when it comes to the removal of our burden of guilt, we must be a small child before him.

You see, a little child knows full well that he needs his parents. When lost in a mall, the small child doesn't conclude, "No problem. I'll just go on home and meet them there." When a small child gets hungry, he doesn't think, "I'll just run to the store and then cook dinner." And when the mortgage bill comes in the mail, the child doesn't think, "I'll grab my checkbook and cover that this month." No, for all their needs... even the basic ones... they rely on their parents. And in a healthy home, the child does not worry about food, shelter or transportation... he trusts his parents. And if it appears mom or dad is not around to take care of needs, then the child will worry, knowing full well he's not able to take care of himself.

When it comes to our relationship with God, when it comes to the removal of our burden of guilt, the true believer knows full well that he is a little child in his relationship with the Father. We are utterly dependent on him. For our needs, we must look to the Father. The true believer knows that for relief from the heavy burden of this sin-sack, only our heavenly Father will be able to help.

- 1) So, you need your burden removed? Stop carrying it. Stop handling it. Stop looking to self for the answers, and understand your utter dependence on the heavenly Father.

But what is his solution?

²⁷ "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.

Jesus reveals a bit more about how to remove the burden of sin. If we rely on the Father,

than we should know that the Father has entrusted this matter to his Son. The Father and the Son are in this close, intimate relationship, as is the Spirit. The Holy Trinity. The Father entrusted to his Son this matter of relieving our sin-burden. And the Son has revealed to you and I the solution for our sin, the relief of our guilt.

And the Father's solution which he committed to his Son which benefits us little helpless children who are being crushed under the weight of the guilt of our sin is this: Jesus Christ takes our sin-sack. The whole burden. Jesus himself has no sin-sack. He had no burden of guilt. He was perfect. And in his love for us, he picked up our load. All of it. He takes it on his shoulders. He takes it to the cross. The Father's wrath for those sins is taken out on him. He dies, and our sack of sin is carried with Jesus to that grave where his body was placed. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead and walked out of that grave. No longer did he bear the guilt of our sins. Through his perfect life and innocent death, the punishment we should have received was received by Jesus. The Son reveals to you and to me, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.

And so with this background, Jesus speaks to us some of the most beautiful words in Scriptures. Does the burden of your sin and guilt weigh heavy on you? Have you been trying to carry them around yourself? Have you tried to free yourself from the guilt, but you have not been able? Jesus says this:

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

Come to Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Unload your burden of guilt on him. Acknowledge your sin before him, and see him pick up that heavy, heavy sack. Every single rock of sin you've committed... Jesus takes it from you. He bears your burden instead of you. Unload, and feel the overwhelming relief of no longer carrying your guilt. You are forgiven.

When a paralyzed man was dropped through a roof in front of Jesus, Jesus removed his heavy burden when he said to him, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*" When a thief hung on a cross next to Jesus cross and came to Jesus with his burden of guilt, Jesus said, "*Today you will be with me in paradise.*" When Martha came to Jesus with the burden of death, Jesus said to her, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*" When a Pharisee spoke to Jesus under cover of darkness, Jesus said to him, "*God sent his son to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned.*"

Now today you come to Jesus with a heavy burden. You're worn out. You're tired. You're exhausted. You feel you can't go on bearing your past guilt. And you're right. So Jesus says to you today, "I will give you rest. You will find rest for your souls." Confess your sins to God. Unload the sin. Place the sin sack at the foot of the cross. And see Jesus take it away as far as the east is from the west. He tosses your guilt into the depths of the sea where they sink, never to be seen again. Sit back and rest. You are unburdened and free... in Jesus. Go with a new-found peace in your hearts, a new found dedication to live for Jesus, and go with a sure hope for the future, for your future is with God. Amen.