

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

September 16, 2018

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Follow Me

PART

3

TITLE

I Will Give You Rest

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 11:25-30



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Well, it is great to see you, Providence family. Really, it is great to see your faces today, and for those who are at home on live stream, welcome. We're thrilled that you have joined us as well, as well as all of those over right now in the amphitheater. And so, we are grateful for you as well.

We all know that the last few days have been very difficult and restless for so many people in our state and in our region. In Psalm 148, it actually says that God has purposes behind stormy winds. It's interesting that God, in all of his power and all of his authority, he doesn't hide behind the curtain of things like a storm. In fact, he acknowledges that his sovereign will allows for such things. The fact is that those purposes, they seem to stretch beyond my own understanding. There's things that I do not grasp. How we say that we were spared, and yet, for us to be spared, it means that many other people were not. In fact, they received what we thought at one time would be ours.

But one thing I do know for certain is that God says in Romans Chapter 8 that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from his love, from the love that we have, that we have received from him through his son Jesus Christ, and so, even when we do not understand the things that take place, and we don't understand what God is doing in the midst of those things, what we can do is to lean on God in faith, and we can lean towards people in love.

He says, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, by the way that you love one another." And so, these are opportunities, these are prime opportunities when the church has the privilege to stand up and show the distinction that's found within the church. And what that means is that we don't stay for a little bit, we stay for a long time in those areas and with those people who are in need. There's going to be a lot of rescue efforts. There's going to be many announcements that you'll hear over the next several weeks and months, maybe even year, of opportunities for you to engage. In the next day or two, you'll see something sent out of various ways that you can start to let us know how you can help, and there's lots of different ways.

There will be teams that we will build that we will plan that we will send out to various parts of our state or our region to go and to cut down trees, or to mud out houses, or to place sheetrock back in those houses. There'll be teams that will need to go and to help actually cook food for vast numbers of people. And so, you'll see those opportunities. I want to encourage us as a church family that we would take advantage of those opportunities, that we would show the world that we are his followers, that we are similar to Jesus Christ, and that we would do that by the way that we would love one another.

There's going to be opportunities for us to give financially as a church family. Things like this, they take an enormous amount of resource, and God has blessed us, and we want to be able to help. Also, this week, we don't know if this will happen, but I've been on the phone with folks, Red Cross as well as from our state, or even looking to use some of our own facility as an opportunity to be a shelter for some people.

And so, we don't know if that's going to take place, but these resources that we have, which is the love of God that's in our heart, it's the resources that he has given us, it's the strength, it's the abilities that we have, and it's the resources such as rooms, such as facilities that we have, we want to be able to leverage those at times just like this to be able to help people, to show people the love that he has for them.

And so, I encourage you, as you wait, you don't have to wait, you can be praying. In fact, I would urge you, I would recommend that you pray. I would also recommend that you go even through your neighborhood and see if there's anybody who has a tree down or a limb down who is in need of our help as well.

But before we get started, let me pray for us. Okay?

Father in Heaven, we look to you now. We thank you, God, that you are a sovereign God, that even eight months ago, Lord, when I sat down and planned out eight months ago what text that would be assigned to this Sunday, we thank you, Father, for what we find here. It's so pertinent to our hearts, and that is that we are tired, we're heavy-laden, and we need rest for our soul. And so I pray that you would use this text, once again, to do your amazing work in our lives.

I pray that you would give us wisdom as a church family in how we can engage in the most opportune and the most strategic ways, the most sensitive ways to help people in their place of need. We do pray for them now. God, we pray first for the families who've already lost a loved one. We pray as they grieve that you would help them to grieve, that you would draw near to them. We pray, father, for those, Lord, the thousands and thousands of people who have lost property, whose home is even underwater, maybe they're even separated from even knowing that yet. I pray, Father, that you would do a special work in their hearts.

We ask for grace upon grace for countless numbers of people that you know by name. And so, we look to you now. We ask that you would strengthen them. We ask that you would use this time, right now, in worship together as we look at your word to strengthen our hearts, not only for the days ahead, but for whatever timeline that you have for us while we're here on the Earth. We want to be people who labor hard and who rest well. And so, would you help us to see where rest can be found?

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Matthew Chapter 11 is where we'll be, and so, if you have a Bible, if you want to turn there with me, starting at verse 25. If you don't, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. If you don't have one at home, take that home with you as a gift.

We all know that it doesn't take a hurricane to cause restlessness within our hearts. Every single one of us knows the reality of anxiety, and most of us know that reality daily. We know what it feels to feel anxious, to be anxious.

I have this recurring nightmare. Now, it's not a scary one. In fact, for most of you, you won't call this a nightmare. You'll just call it a dream. But for me, it happens to be what I would sort of call my recurring nightmare. This is what happens to me quite frequently. Probably a few times, maybe even a month, to be totally honest with you. Okay? In my dream, I wake up. Now, I'm sleeping, but in my dream, I wake up and it's Sunday morning and I look over and it's six o'clock in the morning.

And you think, "Well, that's not so bad." Well, it is for me because Sunday mornings I wake up at 4:30. So that represents an hour and a half being late on a Sunday morning. Okay? And so, what happens to you when you get up late? Right? You get out of bed really quickly and you rush. Well, I don't know about your dreams, but I can't move fast in my dreams, in particular when I'm scared, being chased, or when I'm in a hurry. It feels like I'm walking through a pool of water. And so, I'm trying to rush to the bathroom, to the shower, in order to get ready to get here as fast as I can, but I can't get there very quickly, and in route, I remember that I failed to prepare any sermon for Sunday. Okay? And so, I feel that sense of panic in my heart.

This happens repeatedly. So many times it actually happens on a Sunday morning. I wake up for real, I look over, it's three o'clock in the morning, and I soothe myself. "Wait a minute. I actually have an hour and a half and a sermon. This is good news. And so, let me try to go back to bed." But this happens frequently to me. It's anxiety.

It's interesting that preaching is one of the greatest joys that I have in my life, and in 20 years, here at Providence, in integrity, I can tell you that I have never stood up unprepared. And yet, it's a task that creates a measure of anxiety inside of me frequently.

Every single one of us knows what it's like to feel anxious, and every single one of us knows the efforts that we go to in order to relieve that anxiety in our own lives. And yet, like so many of us, rest is like a gnat that's flying around our face. We know it's there. We assume that we can just grab it and get it, and yet, it's so elusive. There's something about us, in fact, many of us, we can't even vacation well because we're just thinking of everything we need to do, and we take so much to do when we're supposed to be resting. We feel guilty about rest. It's an amazing thing for us.

Matthew Chapter 11 has tremendous news because in a series on when Jesus is calling us to follow him, one of the things we find here is this, that when Jesus invites us to follow him his invitation includes the promise of rest. Now, this is also an area of conviction in our life because what it means is this, that if we're living a constantly restless life, it means that we're not following Jesus as closely as we could.

Being near him when we're following him is like an anecdote to our anxiety. Recognizing his power, recognizing his nearness. To recognize his promises in the moment of crisis, it alleviates, it satisfies that need for us to feel like the world is on our shoulders when we recognize that it's on his. And so, the restlessness that many of us do not enjoy in life is actually a spiritual issue, and that's why we want to talk about it, here, this morning.

So this is what he says. Matthew Chapter 11, starting in verse 25. He says, "At that time." Now, I realize I only read three words, but I want to stop right there. Okay? Because context is really important. We're about to read something that most of us feel like is one of those pillow verses. "Come to me. All you who are weary and heavy laden, and I'll give you rest."

This is so different from most of the follow me passages where he says things like "Whoever does not leave father and mother has no place in me." This is a very, very comforting text, and yet, what I want you to see is the context around it is there's tremendous urgency. There's tremendous seriousness in what he's saying and why we need to pursue rest with intentionality.

You see, at that time is a context, and what we're told about the context of when he said this, right before this is John the Baptist is in prison, and there's a lot of people who don't understand John the Baptist, and there's a lot of people who don't understand Jesus, and so they're making accusations about each one of their character. There's a tremendous level of unbelief that's taking place, and Jesus is acknowledging it, and he's speaking to it.

In fact, the text from verse 20 to verse 24, he actually starts naming cities, and he says, "You guys know that in the Old Testament, that city of Sodom, that they wouldn't repent." And then he says, "The cities that I have walked through as the Son of God, in order to preach a gospel to you, to invite you and them to follow me, if the same signs, if I would have walked through Sodom, they would've repented, and you didn't." And so, at the end, he says, "It will be actually better for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, during Judgment, than those cities that I am walking through right now who do not believe in me."

And so, this context, right, there's a tremendous amount of urgency. This is not Club Med. "Come to me all you who are heavy-laden and I'll give you rest." This is in the midst of battle. And this is what he says. "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, 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. 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 your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'"

What we find here, a few just dramatic truths that will literally change the rest of your life if God would so give us the gift of belief and the courage to apply this to our life.

Three things about Jesus you find, here, in this text. The first is that Jesus reveals the cause of restlessness in those who follow him. For each one of us that would say I'm going to follow Jesus, he reveals the cause of our own restlessness. Now, he knows that there's all kinds of external factors, things like floods and hurricanes and job loss. There's all kinds of things that's happening all around us that our anxiety, or our rest, or our peace has to respond to, and yet, Jesus says here that the lion's share of our restlessness comes from our choice to carry a yoke that he never intended that we carry.

He says, "Come to me all who are heavy-laden." Heavy-laden, it means burdened. It means weighted down. He uses this idea of a yoke. This is an amazing metaphor. You see in this picture, right, a yoke is a harness that's placed on an ox in order that the ox or oxen, the team, can pull a heavy load. This is what he's saying. Such a metaphor.

Let's just say this is the yoke that you have to carry. Just imagine you trying to sleep with that thing on your neck. Just imagine you trying to go to work with that on your neck. Just imagine you trying to relate to your friends and your family with that on your neck. And yet, this is what he's saying is that when we carry a load that we're not supposed to carry, it affects our sleep, and it affects our ability to concentrate at work, and it affects all of our relationships. It affects everything else. If we have a yoke that we're choosing to carry and we're not willing to let go, he said then we become like an ox, burdened down, our head just down, dust everywhere, and we just, "I have to just keep going. I have to just keep going." Jesus says, "This is not the life that I have for you."

He talks about this yoke. What's a yoke? What's your yoke? This is really important that you identify your yoke apart from Christ. We all have one, or maybe more than one. Our yoke is what drives us. Our yoke is, perhaps, even what we find as our identity. Our yoke is what makes us ox-like. Our yoke is what we instinctively, wake up, get out of bed, place over our shoulders, and go about the rest of our day.

It may be your job. It may be your family. It may be all kinds of things. Let me show you a few yokes that some of us have, and you'll notice that there are parts to a yoke that so long as it's not the driving force in our life, there's actually great good in it, but when it becomes the driving force in our life, it becomes a slave master. It becomes something that gets in the way of the rest of our life.

One of these is social media. What a benefit social media is. It allows us to connect and post pictures and different things, and yet, there are some people in this room right now who are sliding down in their seat, and the reason they're doing that is because they check their phones so many times because they have a fear of missing out. They have a fear of missing out of what their friends are doing, or what they're saying, or where they're vacationing, or what they're thinking about certain things.

And so, they check their phone numerous times through the day, and all of a sudden, they go to bed, and it's on. "Okay. I think I have everything. " Go to bed. They wake up and the very first thing they do is reach over, grab their phone, and see what they've missed out on since being awake. Then they have to get up, and so they put it back down. Any pause in their day, including a stop light, is cause to reach over, pick it up. "Anything else happening since the last time I looked at this, which is the last stop light. Nothing. Okay." This is a yoke. This is what he's talking about. That's one kind.

It's really, "I have to stay connected. Socially connected to so many."

Maybe for some in the room it's appearance. There's nothing wrong with diet and exercise, wanting to be attractive, handsome, or pretty, and yet, for some people that mirror is absolutely everything. All of their social posts, "This is what I'm eating." Everything's about their body. Everything is about what they look like. Everything's about how much they exercise. All their conversations come back in some way to this is what I look like. It can be a yoke that makes us restless.

Morality. Morality. There's some people in the room, right now, and they just think, "You know what? I just have to be good to satisfy my conscious and I have to be good to satisfy God's conscious and his judgment." Morality can be tremendous yoke because we go to bed every day, "Did I do enough? I don't know if I did enough. Maybe I should get up and do something else. Maybe just a little bit more." It drives us.

Some people in the room, it may be success. "I have to make a name for myself. I want my dad to be proud of me. He was never proud of me. He may be already in Heaven, but maybe if I perform in such a way, maybe, maybe, just maybe I would be something, be someone."

You remember the great theologian Rocky Balboa, right before his fight with Creed, he says, "Look, if I can go the distance, I will know for the first time in my life that I'm not just a bum."

And some people, they go to work and they're like an ox. They just put their head and say, "I have to succeed. I have to be someone to prove that I'm not just another bum."

Some people, it's approval. They do everything in their life, and they care so much about what other people think about them. Listen, if your yoke is the approval of other people, then every part of your life becomes a stage. You can take it from someone who's on one frequently, stages are really tiring. They're tiring. And you can make every part of your life a stage.

You see, the point is simply this. There's a lot of good things. One of my yokes, it just happens, I frequently, Laura has to tell me that's not yours to carry, is you. I wake up every single morning and the first instinct I have is to immediately go over and put on pastor, and think about all the direction, and all the decisions, and all the conversations, and all the counseling, and all the heartache that I'm aware of, and I just carry that.

Frequently, it happens at night. I'm sitting there, and I can't sleep. So many times, Jesus comes and he says, "It's not yours. It's not yours. You've got to rest."

You see, all of these things, they're all good. Morality is a good thing. Exercise is a good thing. Social media can be a good thing. The church is a good thing. And yet, none of them are supposed to be a god-thing. Whenever they become a functional savior for our joy or for our peace or our rest, they become a god-thing, and therefore, they become a really bad thing.

Jesus wants to identify what your yoke is and mine because following him means taking it off.

Hebrews 12:1 says, "Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set out before us."

And so, one of the things that we've been talking about is following Jesus, and you just need to know that wherever your next step is, it may be your first step to trusting Jesus Christ, it may be your 30,000th step of obedience since you've trusted Christ, whatever is next, one of the things you need to know is this. Is that he wants to pinpoint your yoke that's not him, identify it so that you can remove it so that you're not always burdened down with anxiety and weariness. You have to understand how kind of a Lord that is to us.

The second thing we learn, here, is that Jesus relieves the restlessness for those who follow him. He relieves the restlessness for those who follow him. He says, "Come to me and I will give you rest." So the very first thing we need to know is this. Rest is associated with a person and not a place. "Come to me. Me." It's personal.

You see, there are all kinds of restful places. Right? There's a lot of us that would look at this little hammock and the beach and we'd go, "That is what I need right now. That is a restful place." Now, some of you, you'd take your computer and you'd sit there because you couldn't even do that well. Right? Just chill and just watch the beach. You have to be productive all the time.

Here's the deal. You can spend your entire life on a hammock, but if you don't draw near to Jesus, you'll still be restless. He says, "Come to me." James 4:8, he says, "Draw near to God and God will draw near to you."

See? There's abs no substitute in the world for being near Jesus Christ. He gives peace to people who are anxious. He gives comfort to the downcast. He is the strong tower that the righteous individual runs to and finds safety.

But notice there's not only a person that brings relief, there's also an exchange that needs to take place. He says, "Take my yoke upon you." In other words, we come to Jesus and we say, "I want to follow you." And the very first thing he says is, "Do you see all those yokes that are around your neck that are not me? All those functional saviors? Take them all off."

But this is not an invitation to anarchy. Okay? Jesus' invitation is not a life without restraint. It's a life under his loving restraint. He says, "Now, I'm going to place this yoke over you." In fact, he says, "Take it. Take my yoke." In other words, you wake up every single morning, and so do I, and you look over, and there's two different yokes, and you have to choose which one of these am I going to put on right now? Am I going to put on one of my functional saviors, or am I going to put on the savior, the yoke, the authority of Jesus Christ over me? To draw near to him, to be near him.

You see. What we find here is this, is that when we put Jesus' yoke on, which means his authority, we find that it's so light that wearing it actually gives rest to our soul. This is why John says in 1 John 5, he says, "You know, for those who love God, even God's commandments are not burdensome." They're just pleasant. They're not weighty. They're not overwhelming. They're light. They give lightness and rest to our very soul.

You see. Jesus gives what other yokes simply cannot deliver, even though they promise to give it. One yoke would be morality where we say have I done enough, and Jesus comes and he says, "I made you righteous. There's nothing you can do to add to my righteousness over you. So this yoke can never come back on your neck. It should never come back on. If you take my yoke, you're righteous before me."

How about approval? Jesus comes to us and he says, "I love you. I choose you. You are accepted with me." How about success? We say, "I have to make a name for myself." And Jesus says, "But I have already given you a new name. You're more than a conqueror. You're a son. You're a daughter. You're holy. You're blameless. You're forgiven. You're chosen." He's given us a name. He's given us everything that these yokes simply cannot give. We have to make a choice, and the choice that you make affects restlessness within your soul.

And so, he reveals the cause of our restlessness. Second, he relieves the restlessness for those who follow him. And then there's the third thing that he does, which is just such kindness, and that is that Jesus models rest for those who follow him. He literally comes down, he sits next to us, and notice what he says. He says, "Learn from me. I know how to rest. I can teach you how to do it. I want to teach you how to do it."

When he says here, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly or humble and you will find rest for your souls." This is like a little boy who wants to learn how to fish, and so, he comes to Dad and he says, "Dad, can you teach me how to fish?" And Dad teaches what he knows about catching fish. Jesus says, "Look, if you want to come near me, one thing that I'll teach you how to do is I'll actually teach you how I rest. I'll show you how to do it."

But isn't it interesting how few of us struggle with this, and one of the reasons that we're told here, which is really struggle. Verse 25. Very much a struggle. What he's saying is those that simply cannot believe him, they fail to learn from him.

What am I saying? What I'm saying is unbelief in what he has said is the cause of our anxiety. When we worry about am I going to get a next meal, Jesus says, "Are you not more to me than all the birds of the air and I feed every one of them?" You see, this is why Jesus says, "You've hidden these things, Father, from the wise and you've revealed them to little children."

What's he saying here? This is what he's saying. He says you and I, we simply cannot learn Jesus's lessons on rest until we have the innocent trust of a little child. A little child comes up to a dad. He doesn't know how to fish. The dad knows how to fish. He's a professional fisherman, and when the professional fisherman says, "Son, this is how to fish," he trusts his dad.

Jesus comes to us and he says, "Look, I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. I am the Lord, I invented it. I created it. I gave it to you. I know how to do this thing." And so many times we just say, "You know. I just simply can't believe what you say about rest." And he says, "Well, then you'll never rest."

It's revealed to people who have that childlike trust within their heart. So what does Jesus reveal to those of us in the room who has a childlike trust? A few things. First is that rest is about pausing to enjoy living in God's world. You need to see the word pause and enjoy in that sentence. Rest, he says, is about pausing long enough to enjoy living in his world.

You see, after creating the world, God looked around, and we're told in chapter one, verse 31 of Genesis, he says he looked around and he says it was very good. What does this mean? It means that God didn't just cease from his labor, he also paused to enjoy what he made. What does this mean for us? Well, it simply means this is that we need to pause to enjoy God. We need to pause to enjoy what he's created, to enjoy outdoors, to enjoy the beauty of a flower, to enjoy a forest, to enjoy what he's created, to pause long enough to look.

You see, ox, they don't look. They just look down. They miss everything while they're pulling the load. And he says, "Just pause long enough. Pick your head up and look around. You get to live in my world, all the beauty around." And to pause to, just like he did, to take stock over the fruit of your labor, to look at something that you created, to look at the fruit of your last week to say, "You know what? These are a few things that God helped me to accomplish this week." To pause long enough to enjoy living in his world.

The second thing is rest is about restoring balance. Jesus says, “Okay. If you want to learn from me, you’re going to understand that rest is really about restoring balance in your heart.” This is remarkable to me. The Bible says that rest was given by God to counterbalance the gift that he gave us in work. So both of them are a gift. Work. He’s a producer. He’s a creative God. When we are creating, we’re creating in the image of God, and so we’re being like God when we’re producing and making things. But work is also a gift that’s the counterbalance to our work.

Exodus 20 says it like this. God says, “Look, six days you shall labor and do your work, but on the seventh day, it’s the Sabbath to the Lord. Why? For in six days the Lord made the heaven, and the earth, the sea, and all that it is in them, and rested on the seventh day.” Six days and one day.

It’s sort of like a scale. You’ve seen the scales that we have. There’s one right here. Right? To where you need that balance. If one of the sides has too much weight on it, what takes place is there’s an imbalance whether it’s in justice or where there’s an imbalance in our life. Now, this is remarkable to me.

Imagine the density and the weightiness of rest that it requires just one day to counterbalance six days of work. In other words, you take a week, and at the end of the week, if it’s balanced, you’re going to have six days of productivity and one day of rest.

Then this is why, I think, you can look at two different problems. When somebody’s unemployed and they do not have the ability to work, they want to work, and yet they can’t work. They can’t find a job. It’s not just an economic problem, it’s a spiritual problem. Why? Because it’s like having rest all week long. Six days of work are supposed to counterbalance one day of rest, but imagine what this means for some of us in the room who haven’t taken a day off in like months. That scale is so out of balance right now that you are very much probably looking like an ox. You feel like one. Your head is down. There’s dust everywhere. “I just gotta take one more step. I just gotta keep pulling it. I just have to keep going and keep going.”

Imagine the density that’s involved in rest when he says it equals six days of work. You see, work allows us to produce, but rest sharpens the blade so that we can work well.

Ecclesiastes 10:10 says it this way. Says, “If the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.” What’s he saying there? You go out on Monday and you have a sharp ax and you go to work, and you’re pounding, and all of a sudden, it’s like there’s wood chips the size of Texas that are flying off. “Wow. Look how productive I am.” And soon you get to Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday. Six days, and now, it’s time to rest, but you say, “I don’t need to rest. Look how productive I’m being.” And so, we just keep working. Eventually, that blade gets duller and duller, to where now, we’re swinging as hard as we can, and eventually, what happens is that ax simply bounces off the wood because it’s so dull.

What we deduce from that is swing harder. Double the hours. And God says, “Why don’t you just sharpen the ax? Just rest. Just rest.”

The third thing we learn from Jesus about rest is it’s about reminding ourselves of freedom. Providence, you don’t forget that in Jesus Christ, we have been set free. You see, before the Ten Commandments, which instructed us six days of work and one day of rest, before these Ten Commandments were even given, the people of Israel were slaves to a pharaoh who demanded more bricks, but less material. And then, God worked on their behalf. He delivered them out of Egypt. He gave them a new place, and then he gave them instruction to rest so that they could remember the freedom that God had given to them.

Here’s the deal. We all have an inner Pharaoh. It’s inside of us, and we have to detach ourselves from this inner Pharaoh that wants more bricks with less material.

You see, rest is simply that stake that we drive into the ground at the end of each day when we put our head on the pillow, and at the end of the week when we say, “I’m going to take this day away from work,” where we say, “Jesus, and not my productivity, is my justification. Jesus, and not my productivity, is my confidence in being a man or a woman.” We rest as a reminder to ourself that Jesus worked.

This brings us to a few applications. The first is this is let’s follow Jesus and rest in his work. Let’s follow him and then rest in his work. It’s remarkable to me the timing of Creation. Six days God works and on the sixth day he creates Adam, and then he says, “Now, this is the work that I have for you to do. And in the morning, the very first thing I want you to do is rest.”

Have you ever thought about that? Adam’s first day of living after getting the instructions was God’s seventh day when he says, “Now, we’re going to rest, and you’re going to rest too.” It’s amazing. Adam’s first full day of life was a day of resting in God’s work. And this is ultimately the Gospel.

Religion says you need to work really hard so you can rest.

The culture says work really hard for your weekend. Christ comes in, he says, “I want you to rest in my work, or I want you to weekend really well so you can work.” Don’t you see? It’s all about what Jesus has done. He came to this earth, he died on a cross, he paid the price in order to give us, not only forgiveness, but to impart to us his righteousness. All who would believe in him, all who would trust in him, and who would lean upon him, he says, “Look. You can learn from me. I’m going to give you rest. I’m going to give you justification. You can rest in my work.”

Some of you have never trusted Christ, and so your heart is just constantly restless. You're looking for that thing that's going to satisfy the anxiety in your heart. What Jesus wants you to know whether you're a CEO, whether you're a mom, whether you're a dad, or whether you're the President, I don't care who you are, he says, "Come to me." You have to come to Jesus, and so you can come to Jesus today. You can pray and receive Christ this morning. You can say, "God, I recognize that my life is totally out of balance. I'm trying to justify myself by my work or by my attitude or by my actions or by my morality, my goodness, and I cannot save myself, but I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in what Jesus has done. I believe that he died and rose again."

You see, that rest, Providence, is simply an affirmation that Jesus did enough when we can put our hands, and open them up, and say, "Today, this hour, I'm going to rest." We're reminding ourselves of the freedom that we have in Christ.

The second application is this, is let's follow Jesus and rest from our work, rest from our work. Rest is ultimately an issue of trust. What we're saying is do I trust that God can do, in me, within six days more than I can do in seven? Let me say it another way. God's ability is our incentive to rest. Our belief in his ability is what gives us the green light to rest.

And so, let me encourage you, though, as you think about downshifting one day a week, that you can't do it casually. You have to do it intentionally. When we talk about downshifting intentionally, the most natural thing to do is to add a bunch of rules. We'll mess any good thing up. Okay? Listen. Don't mess up rest by making it exhausting by giving yourself and your family a bunch of rules you have to keep. That's not rest.

But here's a few things for you to consider, what you could do on a day of rest. First of all, consider some time for inactivity. Play a game. Watch a game. Watch a movie. Take a nap. Do something you don't have to produce in. You're just being.

Maybe take some time for active pleasure. This may be what other people call their job, but for you it's different. It may be gardening, planting something. It may be running. It may be hiking. It may be swimming. It may be kayaking. I don't know what it is for you. Maybe doing something where it's active pleasure.

And then maybe take some time to check in with the Lord, to evaluate your life, to take stock. Spurgeon said a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't. So open up that Bible and say, "You know. Let me just rest for a minute. Let me just read. I don't have to read right now. I'm going to just read."

And the last thing is this. Let's follow Jesus and lead others to rest. This really is a beautiful truth. We're going to end here. Tied in the Old Testament to all the rest laws were the gleaning laws, meaning when it was time to harvest your crops, there was laws that were associated with the Sabbath.

One of them was this that if you owned a big field and it was time for harvest, you were supposed to leave the outer edges for the poor among you and not harvest them so that they could come out and harvest as well.

The tie-in to rest in these gleaning laws was this is that you could make decisions to rest that allows the people near you to rest as well. Or you can make decisions of how you're going to rest that makes other people work really hard.

We can't forget that when we're following Jesus that Jesus is moving, he's traveling towards weary people. And so, you can be assured that if you're following Jesus that you too will be traveling towards weary people who are in need of care, who are in need of rest, who are in need of the truth, who are in need of the Gospel, who are in need of help in their yard, who are in need of rest. As we follow him, we're going to have the opportunity to show his love to them, where they too can come to Jesus and find rest for their souls.

I urge you to consider these things.

Let's pray together.

Father in Heaven, we thank you for your kindness to each one of us, and as we consider what you have said in your word about rest, we confess to you that, for the great majority of us, we do not find rest easy. And so, I pray that you would give us the belief in your ability to produce in us what is needed and what you delight to see.

Would you help us to have childlike trust?

And I pray for those in the room who, right now, feel overworked and pressured, burdened, and heavy-laden. I pray, Father, that you would use this morning to give rest to their soul.

So thank you for your kindness to us. Lord, as we sing to you, and as we give to you, we pray that you would fill our hearts with gratitude that we would sing with a full heart, we would also be able to give recognizing, Lord, that these gifts that we give, they go to really important things like helping people who have been affected by the storm, by helping people to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and even our own neighbors. And so we pray, God, that you would help us to be generous in our heart, not only in our singing, but in our giving.

We love you, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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