

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.”²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

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.

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.”

Jesus Gives Us Rest

1. Rest hidden from those who reject Jesus
2. Rest revealed to those with a childlike faith

There’s no doubt about it. A sufficient amount of sleep is important for good health. I’m sure you’ve experienced this before: there’s probably been a period of time when you haven’t been able to sleep well for one reason or another and you’ve felt the effects. Your energy is zapped. You feel run down at work. You may even have contracted a cold because your immune system was weakened. It’s no secret that we need rest in order to remain healthy.

This morning Jesus has some words for us about the importance of rest. But Jesus isn’t talking about getting enough sleep at night or making sure our kids or grandkids take a nap. Jesus is speaking about spiritual rest. One of the great church fathers, St. Augustine, captured the concept of spiritual rest well. He prayed: “O Lord, our heart is restless until it rests with you.” People naturally feel a need to find spiritual rest with God. And there are essentially two ways of going about finding this rest—ways that don’t involve Jesus and the way that centers on Jesus. The truth is that God’s rest is hidden from those who reject Jesus. However we can rejoice that God’s rest is revealed to those who accept Jesus with a childlike faith.

Prior to our lesson this morning, Jesus had sent out his twelve disciples to the people of Israel. Jesus himself proceeded to travel north to preach among the towns in Galilee. We’re told that Jesus taught with great authority and performed many miracles to give witness to his teachings. It was altogether apparent that Jesus was the Messiah. However, in spite of his clear testimony, many were blind to the fact that Jesus was God’s Chosen One. You see, they had other ideas about who the Messiah was going to be. Jesus didn’t come in great splendor; he was only Jesus, the son of a simple carpenter. The people thought that the Messiah was coming to erect a powerful kingdom on this earth. But this Jesus had no apparent suggestion of royalty about him. They simply would not believe that this was the man who had come to save the Jewish people. The Pharisees also resented the fact that Jesus claimed to be the Savior. They had their own ideas about how to have a relationship with God. The Pharisees had developed an intricate system of work-righteousness—pray at such and such a time during the day, take this limited number of steps on the Sabbath day, and so on. They boldly claimed these works brought them closer to God. The bottom line is this: these people refused to believe what Jesus said: “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.”

This is one of the elemental truths of Scripture. Jesus is the One who reveals God to us. But the people didn’t believe it. They much preferred their own wise ways of coming to God. And, really, nothing much has changed from that time until now. There are still those who are trying to develop intricate systems of moral conduct to get right with God. And people flock to these man-made religions and follow them with zeal. Consider scientology: it’s a so-called religion that is all the craze among Hollywood stars. The followers of scientology readily admit, even embrace, the fact that their religion wasn’t invented until the 1950s. People believe that by following the wise and learned teachings of a so-called religion like scientology, they are able to develop a close, personal relationship with God, or the higher power, or whatever it is that they embrace. You can apply this principle to any of the world’s other religions. But it’s altogether a false notion. Listen to the words which Jesus speaks in our lesson: “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.”²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was

your good pleasure.” Our Savior’s words are clear. Someone can devise what seems to be the most intellectual set of spiritual teachings in the world, but they will not reveal the truth about God.

But Jesus’ words don’t apply solely to those who embrace seemingly wise and learned religions. Jesus’ words also apply to anyone who tries to find a personal relationship with God and yet refuses to see that God has committed all things, including salvation and true spiritual rest, to Jesus. Jesus says that all things were committed to him **by the Father’s good pleasure.** Spiritual rest is hidden from those who reject Jesus as their Savior.

Now we need to be aware: this is not an attitude to which we are immune. None of us would ever openly deny that Jesus is our Savior. But at times when we feel like our relationship with God is weak, we may begin to believe that if we live life just a little better, if we pray a little more often and a little harder, if we just avoid that pet sin that usually makes us feel so unchristian-if we just do those things, then our relationship with God will grow much stronger. We’ll begin to feel more Christian again. This is our own wise way of thinking. This sort of thinking compromises Jesus and his merit. It makes our good character and conduct the source of our salvation rather than a response to God’s grace. It’s a common temptation which the devil uses to take our focus away from our Savior and places it on us. When we take our focus off of Jesus, the kingdom of God is hidden from us, as well. **No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**

But by the grace of God, the truth about Jesus has been revealed to us. Through faith created by the Holy Spirit, we have laid our worldly wisdom aside and have looked with a childlike trust to our Savior Jesus. Our worldly wisdom tells us that we can earn God’s favor on our own, that *we* can make God happy with us. But God’s law destroys all such hopes. God’s Word shows us who we truly are. We are people who have a tremendous burden which is yoked upon our shoulders every day. It is the burden of sin. This sin-burden makes it impossible for us to have a relationship with the holy God who has commanded us to be perfect. And no matter what we try to do to remove this dreadful yoke, it still remains. There is no rest for souls burdened by sin. We cry out with the words of the apostle Paul in the second lesson, “What a wretched person I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

“Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

As a little child listens with trusting ears to his parents, so we hear the call of our Savior this morning: **“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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”** We are unable to find spiritual rest on our own. We are wearied and heavy-laden with sin. But Jesus promises that he gives us rest. And this is no empty promise. Jesus provides proof of his gentle and humble heart which reaches out to those burdened by sin. Jesus took the enormous yoke that is our sin-the sin of the entire world, for that matter-and he placed it upon himself. Jesus shed his blood on Calvary so that we can have an intimate and personal relationship with God. Jesus gives us an eternity of rest with our heavenly Father.

Now Jesus invites us to take his yoke upon us. That seems strange at first thought. We have had that horrible burden of sin lifted from our shoulders by Jesus. Why would we want to take another burden upon us? Well, this yoke that Jesus gives to us, it is not a burden or a load. Jesus places a yoke upon us which provides rest for our souls. There is no discomfort; it is a pleasure to wear. This yoke which Jesus places upon us is nothing other than his invitation to believe in him as our Savior. It is the yoke of his gospel promises. Jesus places his yoke upon us and says, “Here! I have lived perfectly for you! I died for your sin! Believe it! Live in these promises!”

And with a childlike faith, we do. That’s why all of us are here at church. We have gathered around Word and Sacrament to be reminded of the source of our spiritual rest. Jesus cleanses us in our baptisms. He revives our souls with the living water of his Word and with the nourishment of his Supper. Every time we hear the message of our Savior we become more confident of his guidance and protection in every aspect of our lives.

Is a good night of sleep important? Certainly. We need our sleep to stay healthy. But how much greater is our need for spiritual rest! Stay close to the one who has taken sin’s burden from you. Rejoice in the eternal rest which Jesus gives. Amen.