

Finding Rest

For the past two weeks, we have focused on the demands of being a disciple. Two weeks ago, we read from the 10th Chapter of Matthew as Jesus lays out the requirements of being His disciple. Last week, we read from Paul's letter to the Romans where Paul encourages us to become enslaved to God. We might become disheartened by the harsh words and be ready to throw in the towel. However, there is hope to be found as well. As we move from the 10th chapter of Matthew to the 11th, we will find mention of rest.

Chapter 11 starts out with two disciples from John going to ask Jesus: **“Are You the Expected One (Lit. *Coming One*), or shall we look for someone else?” (Matthew 11:3 NASB)** John is in prison and will soon be killed. His task was to prepare the way for the Messiah. John wants to know if his mission is finished.

Jesus then speaks very highly of John: **Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! (Matthew 11:11 NASB)**

Jesus now turns His attention to the crowd gathered to hear. He starts with the fact that crowds went to hear John but only a few followed him. He also castigates them for their rejection of Him (Jesus).

“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other *children*, and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard (Or *wine drinker*), a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” (Matthew 11:16-19 NASB)

Many of the religious leaders had a rigid idea of how people should live and act. Their almost “whiney” taunts were like children playing. John did not match their polished idea of how a prophet of God should live. He was dressed in animal skins and ate wild berries and insects. Jesus came and lived differently than John. They complained about that too. He eats too much, he drinks wine, he associates with the wrong people. Jesus lands a painful blow when He tells them that the true wisdom of the law would vindicate both John and Jesus.

Jesus tells them that they will not fair well in judgement. Then he addresses God and again speaks of wisdom.

At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. “Come to Me, all who are weary (Or *worked to exhaustion*) and heavy-laden, 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 (Or *comfortable or pleasant*) and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:25-30 NASB)

The writer of Hebrews tells us about entering the rest that is never available for those outside of the promise of God.

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, (Hebrews 4:1-3a NASB)

Notice that those hearing the message must have faith to be able to enter the promised rest. We may consider 1 Corinthians 1:22 where Paul speaks of the message preached is foolish to those who do not believe.

As we have seen in previous weeks, being a disciple requires commitment and a realization that we will live lives that endure troubles and trials. Yet, here Jesus is inviting us to rest. How do we get these two ideas to come to agreement? Mental health professionals and even common sense tells us that the stress associated with attempting to do something for which we are not prepared or able will generate extreme fatigue. The same is true for attempting to control those forces which are beyond our control. When we look at the cost of discipleship and then at the invitation from Jesus to come and find rest, we must come to the conclusion that our best efforts to live the disciple-life will only leave us tired and unfulfilled. It is rather like someone who laments not winning the lottery. In order to claim the prize in the lottery, there are several requirements. We must purchase a ticket, we must choose the proper winning numbers, and upon those numbers being drawn, we must present the ticket to claim the prize. Our failure at any stage of this process will ensure that we will not end up with the prize.

God offers us His peace and rest. There are no strings attached. The odds don't have to be in our favor. The peace and rest are there for us to claim. Obviously, if we don't come to Jesus, we will not find peace. There are things that we must learn to do so we may find that rest. If you will, there are certain conditions that we must meet. As Jesus mentioned, the burdens of those conditions are easy and are not onerous. So, let's take a few moments to see what we need to do to find and enjoy peace and rest.

First, we need to take our cares to God. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us: **Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7 NASB)** As I read this, I notice a small word following casting. That word is all. I am not to exclude any care or anxiety when I give it to God. We are even told the reason we give our anxieties to God-He cares for us. Many of us fail this first step. We wait until our anxieties are over-whelming and debilitating before we go to God.

This is similar to the message pinned by Paul that we find in Philippians 4:6-7.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NASB)

Here Paul assures us that the peace of God will watch over us. With this peace we are without anxiety and are able to rest. Once more, even Paul tells us to go before God with everything. Second, we need to learn that once we give our cares and anxieties to God, we need to let go of them. We don't need to still try to carry them. David, in the 55th Psalm, tells of going to God with his anxieties. For David, it was like a battle or war raging against him.

As for me, I shall call upon God, and the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice. He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle *which is* against me,

For they are many *who strive* with me. (Psalm 55:16-18 NASB)

Not only did David take his concerns to God, he left them there. David lived like he truly believed that God had redeemed his soul in peace. In verse 22, David speaks of God sustaining him during the times when David felt the oppression of those who were against him. David's

words are: **Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. (Psalm 55:22 NASB)**

For us to find that kind of peace, we must allow God to take our burdens. We must give God our burdens and then let go of them.

Third, we need to surrender our will. This is equally hard as leaving our problems with God. We don't want to let go of our will. We feel helpless and vulnerable. Jesus was nearing His appointment with the cross when we read His words in the 16th chapter of John. In the first few verses of this chapter, Jesus tells His disciples that some would kill them and think that they were serving God (John 16:2). The threat of death is not a path to peace. However, Jesus points to where we find peace.

In the 33rd verse, we read: **These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NASB)**

Jesus clearly tells us that the peace we seek is found in Him. Outside of Jesus (in the world) we will have tribulation.

Prior to this conversation, Jesus told His disciples that He gives peace.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27 NASB)

In Philippians 4:7, as we have already read, we are promised the peace of God. In Romans 5:1, Paul tells us that in Jesus we have peace with God.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1 NASB)

Finally, we find comfort and peace in knowing that we are children of God and thus are victorious over all things.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe (Lit. *do*) His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:1-4 NASB)

The chaos of this world will never give us peace nor comfort. This is only found in Jesus. Jesus extends His invitation to find rest and comfort as He tells us: **“Come to Me, all who are weary (Or *worked to exhaustion*) and heavy-laden, 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 (Or *comfortable or pleasant*) and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30 NASB)**