

Sermon Matthew 11 25 30 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost series A (Adapted)

Sermon: 4th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Theme: “I will give you rest!”

Goal: To show how we have rest only in the Gospel of Jesus; all other words are ‘heavy load’.

Dear Friends

Introduction: “*I WILL GIVE YOU REST*” promises Jesus. Isn’t it rest that we desire and need? We are sometimes so tired, weak and heavy laden... Not just physically, but spiritually too. And Jesus invites us in this text to rest in His gracious hands... What a comfort!!! Not many people have this comfort, and some don’t know where to find it. They are deceived by false teachings.

Luther said that all of us are like donkeys; or we are ridden by Satan, who beats and strikes us, and puts heavy loads on us... Or we are ridden by Jesus, who is “gentle and humble in heart” and leads us to rest. – Do you want rest or heavy burden?

### I – The religions of the Law

By nature, every person knows that he has a lack in his relationship with God; that he needs to do something to please God. This is in the origin of all religions. Some offer sacrifices of animals, as the primitive religions in Africa and in other parts of the world do it. Others think that they need to ‘sacrifice’ themselves with fasting, offering hours and hours of prayers and doing penitence. Even among Christians there are many people and many churches that indicate the way of obedience to the Commandments and to several other laws created by the church as the way to find rest and salvation. This attitude pleases our ‘Old Adam’ in us, as we are setting up a balance between what we are doing wrong and what we are doing right.

Jesus, talking about the church leaders of His time, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, said: “They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulder, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them” (Mat 23:4). Jesus was talking about the numerous laws and rituals observed by the Jewish religion.

Churches that set hard conditions to their membership as a way to get something from God are full and are well accepted by the ordinary people. They are trying to reach God and to reach the heaven on their own way.

## II – The Religion of the Gospel

If we are really honest with ourselves, we know that we are never able to finish with a good balance when we weight our sins and our good deeds. God’s 10 Commandments show us how weak and sinful we are. We cannot walk alone. We need someone to help us, to give us rest.

Listen to Jesus’ invitation carefully: “Come to me, all of you, who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” This is pure Gospel! This is nothing in us, but all depends on Jesus! He is inviting us as a mother calls her child who fell, and let him cry in her lap until he feels himself better and alleviated.

He can do it because He carried our heavy burden Himself on the cross. Isaiah says in Chapter 53 (:5): “He was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”

We sing in the well-known hymn:

“What a Friend we have in Jesus! / All our sins and grief to bear!  
What a privilege to carry, / Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit, / O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer.

“The follower of the Lord Jesus is refreshed through the Gospel and finds rest in the assurance of the complete forgiveness of sins. He is now free to serve God joyfully and willingly.” (SA p.170)

### III – Jesus’ yoke

But “Christian freedom is not license or liberty to live as man pleases but to live as God pleases. In a spirit of Christian freedom and rejoicing, the believer accepts the privilege and responsibility of being a disciple of his Lord.” (SA p. 170). And this is sometimes not easy. We talked past Sundays about the cross, trials and persecution. This is what Jesus mentions when He says: “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 and my burden is light.”

Jesus says: “Take **my** yoke upon you... for **my** yoke is easy...” It is not our yoke, which is heavy; and it is not Satan’s yoke, which is *very* heavy and leads to condemnation! It is Jesus’ yoke! But we are not taking it alone; Jesus is carrying it with us, walking with us; like two oxen walking together under the same yoke. And wherever Jesus goes, we go with Him. And we know which the end of the road is where Jesus is going: The Father’s house. – Remember what Luther said about the donkeys?... With Jesus we are secure!

With Jesus and only with Jesus we are secure. “No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,” says Jesus. Many religions try to find out a way to the Father without Jesus, or with a “false” Jesus. The Africa Bible Commentary says: “The only way to know God is through Jesus. In these days of pluralism, when it is politically incorrect to claim any special status for Christianity, it is important to affirm that it is only through Jesus that true knowledge of God the Father is to be found.” (p.1134).

### Conclusion:

“Jesus invites us daily in the words “Come to me!” The God-man Jesus Christ reminds us that He made the full and final payment for all our sins. Jesus assures us, “I will give you rest.” Our Lord reminds us that He paid the full price for our guilt before God and that He rose as a Victor over sin and death. Jesus offers us rest and refreshment as He did to the paralytic: “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven” (Matt 9:2). He continues to offer us His personal assurance of full forgiveness through Word and Sacrament. His words also point forward to the refreshment and rest that will be ours at the end of days in Christ’s Church triumphant. Jesus invites us to go to Him, to find full salvation and spiritual rest in Him through Word and Sacrament, and to take from Him the yoke of refreshment and rest so that we may serve Him in true freedom, joy and gladness here in time and hereafter in eternity.” (SA p. 170)

Let us read the two last verses of the hymn “What a friend we have in Jesus”:

Have we trials and temptations? / Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged/ Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful, / Who will all our sorrow share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness, / Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, / Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge, / Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
In His arms He’ll take and shield thee, / Thou will find a solace  
there.” Amen

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 06 July 2014 (Adapted)