

Summer time equals rest and rest equals recreation or vacation. But often we work so hard at resting that we need a vacation from our recreation. We work so hard at pursuing rest as this world sees it that we forget about the rest for our souls that God gives us. Far too many Christians think that summer rest means staying away from church worship, but this is one place that we get what is true rest, the Word of God. This Word reveals God’s Son Jesus to us. Burdened by the yoke of our sin as we are, Jesus gives us the rest we need. This rest for our souls and bodies is His forgiveness of our sins that means our eternal salvation.

I. Our Life With God is Simple

A. God Forgives Our Sins in Jesus

Christian faith is not rocket science or brain surgery. High intelligence and advanced education are great and useful in this world. But a high IQ is not necessary to believe in Jesus, to read God’s Word and to confess the Christian faith. It is a simple message: the Son of God has lived for us perfectly, died in our place innocently, and risen from the dead victoriously. Jesus takes from us our sin, rebellion, and disobedience. In return, Jesus gives us His holiness, purity, and obedience. In our text Jesus says that this is revealed to little children. This is not a reference to young age, but to our child-like trust in and our dependence upon our heavenly Father that we, in faith, display at every stage of our lives.

B. Our Human Nature Makes Our Relationship with God Complicated

But such a simple message is one that some see as being simplistic. They are turned off by a faith that even little children can have. Sinfully we focus upon ourselves and decide that we do not need the rest that Jesus offers to us. We see ourselves as too rich, too young, too healthy, too smart, too enlightened, or too busy to accept any rest from Jesus. We feel that we can handle the burden of our sin and life in this sinful world just fine on our own. So we don’t come to Jesus as He invites us to do.

II. Our Life With God is Revealed in Jesus

A. God Comes to Us in Jesus

But again and again our God comes to us in Jesus with His offer of rest for our bodies and souls. In Jesus God came as the Baby of Bethlehem whose birth was announced by angels proclaiming His peace to the world. In Jesus God came as the teacher of faith, the stiller of storms, and the healer of disease displaying God's love for His burdened creatures. In Jesus God came as the Crucified One, put to death upon a cross as the complete sacrifice which takes away our sins. In Jesus God came as the Risen One living in victory over the grave so that physical death could no longer be the devil's weapon against us.

B. Our Human Reason Complicates Jesus' Revelation

Jesus now comes to us in holy baptism to make us His people joined to Him in His death and resurrection. But our human reason skeptically objects: how can a little water poured on person make any difference in life? Jesus now comes to us in the words of the Holy Bible to show us the freedom He has won for us and how we freely can live for Him. But again our human reason skeptically objects: how can words written thousands of years ago have any meaning for us today? Jesus now comes to us in the Lord's Supper where bread and wine are His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. But again our human reason skeptically objects: how can a little bread and wine be Jesus for us? How can taking them do us any good? Our human reason tries to interfere with Jesus' special revelation.

III. Our Life With God is Rest for the Weary

A. Jesus Gives Us Rest

Jesus comes to give us rest from trying to figure out God with our limited human reason. Jesus comes to give us rest from trying to earn God's favor with the good works we think we do. Jesus comes to give us rest from the anxiety of life in this mixed-up world. Jesus comes to give us rest from pursuing possessions in effort to get ahead in world,

only to leave them behind when death takes us from here. Jesus comes to give us rest from pursuing physical pleasure thinking it will fulfill us but finding instead that it leaves us feeling empty, used, and rejected. Souls that are at rest with God through Jesus Christ translate into bodies that are at rest from the troubles of this life and people that are actually healthier and happier in that life.

B. Jesus Places Upon Us the Light Yoke of Faith

Jesus invites us to be His followers. He calls upon us to “take My yoke upon you.” A yoke is a plank of wood put across the shoulders of a human or an animal for it to carry a heavy weight. Jesus promises to give us rest but then tells us to carry a yoke. This sounds like work, but it is “easy, light.” Here Jesus speaks of faith, the believing response to His offer of salvation that the Holy Spirit works within us. The religions of the world tell people, “Do this and don’t do that in order to earn your salvation from this life.” The Christian faith is Jesus saying to us, “I’ve done it all for you, take from Me the forgiveness, life and salvation that I already have won for you.”

Now we live in this faith in these ways: because of Jesus there are things we will not do because they go against His will for our lives; because of Jesus there are things that we will do out of love for Him and in thanks for His goodness to us. We don’t “have to go to church,” instead, we get to worship our Lord in His presence along with our fellow believers. We don’t have to teach Sunday School or Vacation Bible School, instead, we get to share God’s good news of Jesus with the children of our congregation. We don’t have to put money in the offering, instead, we get to thank God with a portion of all that He has given to us.

This life is a rat-race. Work never seems to get done. We become more and more tired and seem to fall farther and farther behind. But in Jesus we have rest because the work of our forgiveness is done for us. Jesus now calls us to be His people. In faith and with thanks, we respond to that call refreshed, rested, and ready for a new and eternal life with Him. AMEN