

Come To Me

Matthew 11:16-30

July 16, 2017

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Just sixteen words. “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” But they are loaded. Jesus says two things. He invites. “Come to me.” Then he promises. “I will give you.” Come to me. I will give you.

Jesus also says a thing or two about humility. You have heard me profess many times that we are called to be humble. But we will never know we have achieved humility because once we think we are humble, then we are not. In our text Jesus calls himself humble. Jesus is the only one who could say “I am humble” and still be humble. Now that is humility. So don’t try to be humble. Just be like Jesus.

Okay, so as with most Scripture texts, there are many directions we could go with this one. I want to focus on the truth—and this is true—the truth that Jesus invites not the wise and the learned, but the weak and the weary. Now there are those who will say that Jesus invites everyone. True. But hear me out. Those who are wise in their own eyes do not hear any invitation by Jesus. If they did, they would see no reason to respond. The weary? They run to Jesus.

“I am just so tired!” Have you ever uttered that statement? Of course you have. What has led you to say that?

Growing up, I heard that uttered on more than one occasion...by my parents. Only they would add “sick” to the equation. “I’m just so sick and tired....” Now what made them sick and tired was some behavior being exhibited by one of their children. It was not a one-time indiscretion that led to their illness and weariness. If I did something wrong one time, I would be corrected.

But if I persisted in the misbehavior, then would come the “I’m-just-so-sick-and-tired” statement.

It’s when a thing continues with what seems like no end in sight...like in the area of the physical. Too many consecutive hours of being awake leads to tiredness. My son just ran Grandma’s Marathon. He ran for almost four hours...like four hours all in a row. Boggles my mind. But he did it. At the end of the four hours, he was tired. His weariness lasted a couple of days. He did no running for a few days. Why so tired? Because he kept running for all those minutes. The miles just kept coming. At one point in the race he wondered if the end would ever arrive. I could run for a hundred yards and not get too tired. But twenty-six miles? You know what I mean.

I get tired...tired in my body...but very tired in my spirit. I am tired. I am tired of the way people treat other people. I’ve grown weary of people not being able to just get along. So many times I have said there is just no excuse—no excuse whatsoever—for being mean. I’m tired of groups of people thinking they are better than other groups of people. I’m tired of people thinking that somehow it is their God-given duty and right to sit in judgment on other people. I’m tired of people doing what God said is his job to do. I’m tired of people bullying people and persecuting people. The **USA Today**, just this past week, ran an article under the headline “The State of Hate in America”. I read it. It tired me. There is so much wrong in the world. So much hurt. It just keeps coming at us. It sure doesn’t seem to be getting any better. There seems to be no end in sight. I’m just tired of it.

What makes you tired and weary? What burdens you? We all have those things that burden us.

You know one big reason I think I am tired...why we get tired? I am tired because I just don't get it. I just don't understand it. I/we ask why. We ask why because we do not understand. And when I don't understand it, you know where I must go? I turn to Jesus. I go to Jesus and I talk to Jesus and I pour out my heart to Jesus and only there in the presence of Jesus do I find a bit of a respite...a bit of rest. That's where we go.

Jesus invites people who just do not get it...who do not understand it. Jesus invites the weary and those weighed down by worries and cares.

Our text for today begins with Jesus asking, "To what can I compare this generation?" Jesus then offered a description for the generation to which he referred. He compared the generation to children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others. "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." What in the world did Jesus mean by that? I think he was saying his generation was fickle and restless. They were like spoiled children. They were like the people who wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Nothing seemed to satisfy them. Some upbeat music was played. The people didn't like that. They didn't dance. So some of the downer music was played...dirges. The people didn't like that either. No dancing. No mourning. John came, and they criticized John. Jesus came, and they criticized Jesus. A restless people. Jesus' description of that generation could also describe every generation since—including our own.

Jesus then pronounced woes on cities that refused to repent. Those were cities that were wise in their own eyes. They believed they were a learned and understanding people. They did not need Jesus.

Then Jesus issued his invitation...his invitation to the tired and troubled. You know one thing that wearied many of the people in Jesus' day? There were those wise and learned people. Pharisees and scribes and teachers of the law. Those folks understood just about everything when it came to being right with God. All you had to do was ask them. They would tell you they

understood everything. You know...people who think they understand everything when it comes to being right with God are people who need Jesus the most...only they don't know it. Those so-called wise and learned people back in Jesus' day were teaching the people that they had to obey the law. They were doomed if they didn't. The people found this obedience thing so difficult. They were falling short. Their efforts at obedience had become a burden, and they were getting tired.

Jesus prayed. Jesus thanked God that God had hidden things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to little children. See it was then, and is today, quite simple. Now...please note...I didn't say easy...I said simple. Very simple. Jesus said, "Come to me." That's it. "Come to me." All there is to it. Go to Jesus. To the people who struggled at trying to obey the law to be saved, Jesus said, "Just come to me."

That is the good word and the good news. To every person in every generation since, Jesus says to people who are tired, "Come to me."

Here's the deal. I am making a bit of a turn here. The first and primary and most important activity in which we engage as followers of Jesus—as disciples of Christ—is we go to Jesus and then we be with Jesus. What do you think the most important thing is we do as followers of Jesus? I could ask that question of several people and get more than one answer. Some might say the most important thing we do is we pray. Others might say the most important thing we do is we worship. Still others might say the most important thing we do is we tell others about Jesus.

In the third chapter of Mark's Gospel we read these words, "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." Jesus called and appointed these twelve. Note that the text says they were to do three things. They were to preach. In other words they were to tell others about Jesus. They were to

drive out demons. Pretty cool, huh? But notice the first thing they were to do. What was it? They were to be with Jesus. Be with Jesus.

There is so much happening in this world. And we get tired. We worry about so much. We do so much. We do. Everyone here does a lot. We do a lot here in the church. This is true. We get tired. Some people get tired just trying to do what they think will be pleasing to God. We get weighed down. We feel burdened. We are beat and weary.

Listen! The first thing is to hear that good word from Jesus...that word of invitation. "Come to me." "Me" Jesus says. It is all about Jesus. We go nowhere else. We go to Jesus. Jesus invites us to yoke ourselves to him. Yoke...you know...that device used to hold together two laboring animals. We take the yoke of Jesus...join ourselves to him. That is the only place we find rest for our weary spirits.

As disciples of Christ...as followers of Jesus...this is the first thing...the primary thing. We do need Jesus. So we go to him. And then we be with him. Be with Jesus...with Jesus every step. Then we might not feel so weary and be so weighed down. Jesus said his burden is light.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."