

Introduction:

- A. Illus.: I was telling a friend about the emphasis of our church on being a home and he urged me to read a 1968 book by the pioneering Christian psychologist, Paul Tournier, entitled, *A Place for You*. The book begins:
 The words were those of a young student with whom I had formed a deep friendship. He was sitting by my fireside, telling me of his difficulties, of the anxiety that never left him, and which at times turned to panic and to flight. He was trying to look objectively at what was going on inside himself and to understand it. Then, as if summing up his thoughts, he looked up at me and said:
“Basically, I’m always looking for a place—for somewhere to be.” [p.9]
- B. Ever since Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden human beings have been homeless; spiritual vagabonds, refugees, displaced people; many are deeply homesick. What’s more, like the prodigal son, we take all we can from our heavenly Father and then disown him; we’re not only homeless, we’ve made ourselves fatherless.
- C. The church—the local church, like Village Church—is the place God has created for people to come home. That *“somewhere to be”* is here among us. In the Bible, our *first family*—our most important and enduring relationships—are with Christ and the brothers and sisters he has given us in the church. Today we continue to explore the passages that shape our church’s identity. Turn to **Matt 11:25-30**.
- D. For Matthew, these verses are a kind of rest stop in the story and teachings of Jesus so far. Matthew and Luke record exactly the same words, except that Luke adds one phrase. Matthew begins in **v.20**, *“At that time Jesus said...”* Luke says, *“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said...”* So we know Jesus was elated and praise leaped up from within him: **vv.25-26...**

I. **JESUS CHRIST EXULTS IN THE KINGDOM SECRETS HIS FATHER REVEALS TO CHILDLIKE PEOPLE (11:25-26)**

- A. When Jesus began his ministry, Matthew says it was just like Isaiah had promised: *“The people living in darkness have seen a great light.”* Jesus began to preach, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”* People came and listened.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had opened people’s blind eyes to life in God’s kingdom and they’d been amazed. Then, a Roman centurion believed that Jesus’ word was as good as a command and his servant was healed. This Matthew, who wrote this gospel, was a corrupt tax collector who left everything behind to follow Jesus. In **ch.13** Jesus will tell his disciples that he spoke in parables to disguise the secrets of the kingdom from those who didn’t have ears to hear. In **ch.18** he would put a child on his lap and say, *“Whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Not one thing Jesus taught was intuitive to the people around him. It was all new—the glad news of what God’s kingdom is really like. And it was absolutely offensive to their religious teachers. Not only didn’t they get it; they fought tooth and nail to silence him.

- B. But here in **Matt 11**, looking back at what had already happened, Jesus praised his Father for bypassing the so-called “wise and learned” leaders and revealing the kingdom’s secrets to childlike people like Jesus’ disciples, or that centurion, or to Matthew himself. It is the same message as the story of the prodigal son and the elder brother. **The astonishing, magnificent thing about the heavenly Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, is that he threw open the doors of his kingdom to the little and lowly people who would bend down to come in through Jesus.**

So how did the Father do it? How did the Father reveal hidden things to the childlike? V.27....

II. GOD THE FATHER ENTRUSTED EVERYTHING TO HIS SON (11:27)

- A. *“All has been committed to me by my Father.”* V.25 just told us that the Father is *“Lord of heaven and earth,”* so when he gives all to Jesus the Son, there is nothing Jesus Christ does not control. Jesus is Lord of all.
- B. You might expect to read next a catalog of all the realms of Christ’s authority but what he says next is what is most precious: *“No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son.”* Here is one of those hidden things we’d never grasp on our own: Nothing in all the vast wealth of this creation or the next compares to the treasure of love within the Trinity—the intimate knowing of Father, Son and Spirit. **Matt 3:16-17** tells about Jesus’ baptism: *“At that moment heaven was opened, and [Jesus] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”*

Here is love so high and wide and deep that it is measureless, love so beautiful and strong, tender and timeless, that all else in creation springs from their love. We tend to think of God’s love as something he *gives* to others, but God’s love starts within the Trinity, this delighted *knowing* shared together by Father, Son and Spirit.

- C. And then comes the astonishing good news: *““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.**”* What God *“has revealed to little children,”* (v.25) he has revealed *through Jesus Christ* (v.27)! **That revelation is the great joy of Jesus, the delight of his Father, and the happy work of the Holy Spirit.**

So how do we get this revelation? How do we get in on this love? Jesus says in **v.28**, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

III. JESUS INVITES ANYONE WHO IS WEARY AND BURDENED INTO THE REST FOUND ONLY IN THE LOVING RELATIONSHIPS OF GOD (11:28-30)

A. There is something almost like a great sigh that arises from that phrase, “all you who are weary and burdened.” It stops us in our tracks. Shoulders sag, hands drop, faces go slack. All the world is weary and burdened.

To be clear, Jesus is not speaking to those who haven’t gotten enough sleep or whose jobs are draining or those who are going through exhausting trials. In fact, Jesus said elsewhere, *“In this world you will have trouble.”* This verse carries us back to Adam and Eve’s last wistful look into the Garden of Eden from which they’d been banished. This verse touches the longing to walk once more in the garden with God. This verse is for people beleaguered by rules they could never keep and standards they can never live up to; a harassed and helpless flock abandoned by their shepherds; sons and daughters who have never known their Father and who are sick to death of homelessness.

B. When Jesus says, *“Come... I will give you rest,”* he offers something far better than leisure. His word rest means refreshing, restoration, peace of mind and heart, “peace that passes all understanding.” He is offering a Sabbath for our souls, a life away from all that is dehumanizing.

C. So how do we get this rest? Come to Jesus... and take up his yoke. *Wait! I thought we were going to rest. A yoke brings to mind two oxen pulling a heavy load.* Look at what we know about Jesus’ yoke:

1. We just saw in **v.27** that Jesus’ work was revealing the love, life, and kingdom of God, and it thrilled him with joy to do it.
2. So we yoke up with Jesus to do this work of knowing and showing the Father’s love and the secrets of living

in his Kingdom. And doing that work gives us rest—it refreshes us and restores us.

3. We might rightly hesitate: *I don't know how to do that kind of work.* That's why Jesus continues, *"Take my yoke upon you **and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.**"* In **Matt 23:4** Jesus condemned Israel's teachers, *"They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them."* But that's not Jesus! Jesus teaches us through all of Scripture how to do the refreshing work of knowing and serving God, *plus* he empowers us constantly for that service through his Holy Spirit. Remember how he told his disciples, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses."*

What taskmasters drive and drain your soul? The never-satisfied demands of your dad or mom? Your own drive to succeed, to matter, to win? Your **shame**? Your **fear**? Your **loneliness**? Who in your head tells you to do more, to work harder, to fight back. Maybe you actually imagine Jesus himself is never satisfied with you, always disappointed, always expecting you to get up earlier, or pray more, or sit up and behave yourself. ***Is your soul at rest?*** Is Jesus rejuvenating and restoring you? Because that is what Jesus does. That's his great joy and his **gift** to you. *"Come... I will **give you** rest. ... You will **find** rest for your souls."* Free gift!

4. Jesus sums up in **v.30**, *"For my yoke is easy"*—it fits you comfortably; it doesn't chafe and blister or demean you. *"My yoke is easy and **my burden is light.**"* That's a paradox, isn't it? A light burden. Look back at Jesus' joy, at his face bright and glad, his hands heavenward, praising his Father, for revealing himself and his kingdom to little children like us. Look! Because that is

Jesus at work! And that is the feather-light burden he invites us to share with him. *The Message* captures it this way: “*Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.*”

5. This work is so wonderful, so life-giving, so restful, that it is the work of heaven itself. We will pour all our perfected energies into knowing the Lord and exploring all the secrets of his kingdom ways and worlds. We will never grow weary, and our hearts will grow into the immeasurable love of the Triune God forever and ever. So Jesus invites us *now* into the life-giving work of heaven.

Conclusion:

Let me ask you a question. **Is your soul tired to death? Is your soul fatherless?**

Unregenerate souls, like children who have lost their parents, spend the rest of their lives trying to find what they’re missing: security, the comforting love of mealtimes and bedtimes, knowing who you are and what your name is. There are no desires more heartbreaking or desperate than the desires of an orphaned soul. Orphaned souls age too quickly and seldom rest easy. [*Pastoral Graces*, pp.107-108]

Jesus is talking to you: “*Come to me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” Come like a child to your heavenly Father. Leave the other life—which is no life at all—leave it behind and come home to the love of God, through Christ.

And you who are Christians: have you forgotten what satisfies your soul? Have you forgotten that all the turmoil and trouble around you doesn’t have to define you? What is it in us that makes us think entering quietly into God’s love is a luxury we don’t have time for, or worse—drudgery that will drain us? Your spiritual life is not measured by your quiet times or your hard work for Jesus, nor all the theological thinking you do. Our life comes from being with the Lord and being yoked up with him in the refreshing work of God’s kingdom. ***Take a Sabbath in Jesus.***

Serving Jesus isn't easy, of course. People even die serving Jesus. But I love what Jesus told his weary disciples in **Mk 6:31**, *"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*

The young man I told you about at the beginning said, *"Basically, I'm always looking for a place—for somewhere to be."* Village Church, we're meant to be that place for people. We have the God-given privilege of being the church of the well-rested. We help each other seek the life of the Lord. We pray for each other, and encourage each other. We forgive each other and admonish one another and worship together. We love righteousness and expect one another to obey Jesus, but we rely on God's grace. It is only by the grace of Jesus that we find rest. Always grace!

Illus.: Maybe you've heard me tell before about the guy I called Two-Phone Joe. The first time I met him, I was sitting at an outdoor table at Einsteins. He came out, cell phone pressed between shoulder and ear, talking a blue streak. He had a cup of coffee in one hand, a Coke in the other, and another phone on his belt. When he put his cup down to hang up, I said, "Man, you've got to relax a little!" And that's how my friendship got started with one of the most hyper guys I've ever known.

Joe and I talked often. Actually, Joe ranted and raved, and I mostly listened. Once, I was sitting at an inside table and he came in, assaulting his phone as usual. He talked, loud and angry, the whole time he ordered and then, after he sat down, he kept arguing for the whole coffee shop to hear. When he finally got off the phone, I said, "Joe, come here."

"What?" he barked, guardedly.

"Sit down here," I repeated.

"Why?" he asked, but he sat down.

"Joe, I don't know if anyone has ever done this for you before, but I am going to pray for you right now." Joe's eyes got big, and he looked at me like I was crazy. Before he could run, I just put my hand on his arm and quietly prayed for a few seconds, asking God to quiet Joe and to give him peace.

"Thank you," Joe said softly, and I wondered if that might have been the first holy moment in Joe's entire tumultuous life.