

## Introduction

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Welcome to St. Peter's Lutheran Church Estevan. Pastor Kleemola here to bring you a partial service for Pentecost 5 – July 5, 2020.

## Readings for this Sunday

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Old Testament Reading: Zechariah 9:9-12

Psalms: Psalm 145:1-14

Epistle: Romans 7:14-25a

Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

## Text for today's Sermon is taken from Matthew 11:25-30

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<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; <sup>26</sup>yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup>All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. <sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

## Sermon – I Will Give You Rest

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Dear friends in Christ Jesus; **"Come to me,"** Jesus says, **"all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** (v 28) and we say, "Great!" for we've been labouring. We've been working hard at our jobs, putting in long hours, and still struggling to get ahead. We've been working at being a loving spouse, providing for our families, being the best mom or dad we can, and yet, every day it seems we're buried deeper in a pile of regret: "I should have been home more." "I could have spent more time with them." "Why does such a little thing cause me to lose my temper?" "When will I ever figure this out?" Even our kids know what it means to work,

competing with their siblings or classmates to earn the approval of Mom and Dad. They think they need to earn that approval so their parents will be proud and love them. **“Come to me,”** Jesus says, **“all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** We say, “Great!” for we have been working and are in need of rest. But What Sort of Rest Does Jesus Give?

Well, what sort of rest do we need? Is it the rest we get with a day off from work to swim, eat barbeque, and enjoy the beautiful fireworks? Is it the sort of rest that comes with a family summer vacation? a week spent at the beach or a road trip to take in the sights of the Rockies? Maybe it's the sort of rest that comes with sleeping in. That is a kind of rest, and I'm fairly certain that none of us will complain about an extra day off work. Work wears us out. But is this the sort of rest of which Jesus is speaking? Is this what Jesus promises to give to those who labour and are heavy laden?

The answer, of course, is no. He isn't speaking of a rest that is simply taking a break from work. You don't need Jesus in order to have a day off! So what sort of rest *is* Jesus promising to give? To answer this question, let's take a closer look at the sort of person to whom Jesus promises to give this rest.

**“Come to me,”** Jesus says, **“all who labour and are heavy laden.”** When we hear these words, we easily understand the labour part. We understand the work. Everyone understands the work part of Jesus' invitation. The nature of our lives on earth, even before the fall, involves work. It's what we do as human beings: work the ground, work our jobs, work at school, work for our families, work to take care of the house. Work, work, work. It's what we do all our lives.

Everyone works, to some degree. Everyone labours, as Jesus calls it. But Jesus promises to give rest to those who work and are heavy laden, and He's not just talking about those who are physically or emotionally exhausted because they've been working too hard. No, when Jesus promises to give rest to those who've been working and are heavy laden, He's promising to give rest to those whose work has caused them to be burdened. And not just burdened by a mountain of debt, a pile of regret, or failure to achieve all your personal goals. The rest Jesus promises to give, He promises to those whose work has caused them to be burdened in conscience.

That's what it means to be heavy laden – to know the work that the Law of God demands you to do and, at the same time, to know you've been unable to do it. To know what the Law of God demands of you as a husband or wife and to know daily that you have not managed to do the work the Law demands, no matter how hard you've tried. To know what the Law demands of you as a father or mother and to wonder every night, as you put your children to bed, when your

failures will catch up to you. To know what the Law demands of you as a child and to desire to do it; but day after day, you act and speak without thinking, doing what you know you shouldn't, and you wonder when your parents or your teachers will finally have had enough of you. This is what it means to be heavy laden.

To know what the Law of God demands of you, because you know what the Law of God demands. And even more than that, to know that the Law of God is good and wise and is nothing less than the will of God. It's what God demands of you as a spouse, and as a parent, and as a child, and that's why you are heavy laden. It's why you are burdened in your conscience. You know your sin.

This is why Jesus promises to give you rest. You know that your work falls short of the will of God, and as a result your conscience is burdened. He promises to give rest to those who know their work is full of sin, whose consciences are plagued by what they've done and by what they've left undone. He promises to give rest to those who know they justly deserve His temporal and eternal punishment, for they know the Law of God and they know they haven't kept it. He promises to give rest to those who work and labour, day after day, but whose consciences are burdened by their sin.

To see an example of this, we only have to turn to Paul in today's Epistle: **"I do not understand my own actions,"** he writes. **"For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good."** (Rom 7:15–16) Paul knew the Law. And Paul knew that the Law is good. Like you, Paul knew that, try as he might, he could not keep the Law.

Paul goes on: **"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing."** (7:18–19) Clearly, Paul wants to do the Law of God. And clearly, he finds, day after day, he cannot do it. Like you, the evil he doesn't want to do seems to be what he keeps on doing. Until finally, as a man whose con-science is burdened with his sin, he has no choice but to say, **"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** (7:24)

That, you see, is the plea of a man who has laboured and who is also heavy laden. It's the very sort of person to whom Jesus promises to give rest. Not simply a person who works. Not simply a person who has regret. But a person who knows that he deserves nothing but temporal and eternal punishment because of his work. That, you see, is the person who labours *and* is heavy laden.

To such a person, Jesus says, **“I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you.”** (Mt 11:28–29) “Take my work as your work. Take the work I am doing to fulfill my Father’s will and have it as the work that you are doing. Take my life as your own. Let it be credited to you so that you might rest and not live in fear. For that is *my* yoke. The Law is *my* burden to pay so that you might learn from me that I am gentle and lowly in heart, and so that you might find rest for your souls. Take my yoke, the work I am doing on your behalf, even unto death, and have it as your own. My yoke, given to you, is easy. The burden I bear is light when it’s given to you as a gift.”

**“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”** (Rom 7:25) Jesus gives true rest. He gives peace for the consciences that are burdened by sin and live in terror under the weight of the Law. He took all of that. He bore all of that. He died for all of that, so that you might learn from Him that what He desires most of all is to give you the gifts He freely earned for you, so that you might rest in Him, so that you would have peace in Him.

What this means is that worship is not about us doing more work to please God. If that’s the case, then worship would simply be another work to add to your burdens. Who can pray without being distracted, or sing a hymn with the zeal of an angel? How absurd it is that those whose work is the source of their burdens would think that worship is our chance to do enough work for God!

Worship is not another place for the Law of God with its high demands to heap burdens on you. Worship is the place you come with all the burdens of the week and all the piles of regret and all the sin that plagues your conscience and you meet Jesus, hear from Jesus, and learn from Jesus, receiving from Jesus the rest He promises to give to you. You who have laboured and are heavy laden come, and Jesus gives you rest. It’s Divine Service. It’s the place you’re able to stop your work and rest while Jesus fulfills His promise.

**“Come to me,”** Jesus says, **“all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** To you who’ve been working, to you whose consciences are heavy, Jesus keeps His promise. Jesus gives you rest. When the Law shows you your sin, Jesus gives you rest with the Absolution that forgives your sin. When the Law of God shows you that you haven’t lived as you ought, Jesus gives you rest because He united Himself to you in Holy Baptism and gives you His life as your own. When you are burdened by sins you continue to battle, Jesus gives you rest in His very body and blood, showing you that He died for those sins. Thus, He gives you strength to live each day as you rest in Him.

That, you see, is the rest Jesus promises to give. He promises to give peace to you who know the Law of God and who know you haven’t kept it. He kept the Law in your place, and the

rewards He earned by keeping it, He wishes for you to have. So even while you work, you always rest in Him. Amen.

## Prayer of the Church

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Merciful Lord, hear the prayers of Your people and grant to us grace sufficient for our needs and all those for whom we pray.

Our God and King, as once Your people received You in joy, open our hearts to rejoice in Your coming so that we may meet You in Your Word and Sacrament, for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. Help us to bless and extol Your name before the nations and to declare Your salvation to the generations to come, proclaiming that You are merciful and gracious and abounding in steadfast love.

Our merciful God and Lord, You are good to all Your creation. Continue to bless Your Church and to provide for her faithful pastors who will preach and teach Your Word and church workers who will serve us in Your name. Make bold our witness before the nations, and help us to act in love toward our neighbours.

Our Creator and Lord, *from You* all things come and *to You* are all things directed. Provide for our nation faithful leaders who will hear and heed Your law, protect and defend the citizens, preserve the precious gift of liberty, and inspire us to use our freedom honourably. Make us mindful of the heritage our forebears have given to this land, and guide us to be faithful in our stewardship of all the resources You have provided.

Our wise and giving God, You are the God of truth and in You is no falsehood or deception. Help us to delight in Your Law, to love what is good and true and right, and to seek after these things. Help us to wage war against the old Adam within us, restore us when we stray from Your Word, and forgive us when we give into the devil's temptations.

Our compassionate Lord, we do not suffer alone the pain and afflictions of this life, but we live them out within Your grace and are sustained by Your mercy. Hear us on behalf of the sick, those who suffer, the grieving and those to whom death is near, especially Pattie Berday, Rod Gust, Wanda Stang, and Cheri Haberstock and her family at the passing of her mother from this

life to the next. According to Your will, deliver them from their afflictions and give to all Your strength, patience and hope, that they may endure to eternal life. Show compassion, and drive all pestilence from our land.

Our loving Father, You have hidden Your greatness from our wisdom and made Your ways known to children. Guide us to bring our children to the waters of Baptism, to raise them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and to know perfect rest and peace within Your loving arms.

Our gentle God and Lord, You have invited us to come to You with the heavy burdens of this life, that we may find rest and peace in Your mercy. Grant relief to those who struggle, supply to those in need, hope to those who fear, and peace to those who are anxious, that we may be delivered from all adversity and brought to everlasting life, where we shall join the saints of old in Your presence forevermore.

Our heavenly Father and gracious God, as we come to the table Your Son has set, grant to us faith and repentance so that we may receive with joy and thanksgiving His flesh in this bread and His blood in this cup. Grant us Your Holy Spirit, that what we have received with our lips we may keep in holiness of life.

All these things, blessed Lord, we pray You to grant us according to Your merciful goodness and for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Benediction

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The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.