

July 9, 2023 Sermon
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

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Theme: Come to Me

Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Date: 07/09/23

In order to better understand these words of our Lord, it is important that we look at them in their context. So let me read the preceding verses, verses 20-24 for you.

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

Wow! Jesus really unloads on these three Galilean cities: Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, which is quite interesting, because he spent more time in them, than anyplace else. He performed many more miracles in them than in any other cities he visited. He taught in their synagogues more frequently than anywhere else. Yet in keeping with the old adage, "familiarity breeds contempt", they still rejected him as the Messiah; as the Christ who had come not only to save them, but everyone else.

Now, we might be tempted say, "How could they be so foolish?" I mean if someone were to come here to Highlands Ranch and heal everyone in the local hospitals or walk into a local funeral parlor and touch a little girl who was known to be dead and say to her, "Get up little girl" and she did, certainly we would be able to figure out who he was, wouldn't we?

But if we take a good honest look at ourselves, our community and our nation and if we look at the spreading lawlessness and perversion and the massive movement away from Jesus Christ and away from Christian values, it wouldn't take us long to conclude that Jesus might well pronounce the same harsh judgment upon us. Woe to you! Woe to

you, Highlands Ranch, Colorado! Woe to you, U.S.A.! We might be tempted to say. "Well, I've never seen Jesus do any miracles or He has not personally come and taught me anything." And in response I would have to tell you that, "that is just a cop-out." God does miracles every day from causing the sun to shine, to the rain to fall, to the plants to grow, to people being born enemies of God and then in the waters of Holy Baptism being raised up from the death of sin and birthed to a life of faith in Christ.

Beloved, we all witness miracles every day, but we just don't want to give God the credit or the glory or the honor that He deserves. And as for not being taught by Jesus, well, who do you think sent me and the all other pastors that you have ever had who have faithfully preached and taught His Word among you? Perhaps that is the greatest miracle of all, that God would take a miserable rotten sinner like me, a former unbelieving, agnostic, selfish heathen and make me His servant. He took someone who believed in nothing and made him a preacher of His Gospel. Who ever said God doesn't have a sense of humor? I'm living proof that he does.

So, the upshot of all of this is that we, of all people, should know better. The Word of God has had free course in this nation for many generations. The Bible has been, and still is, taught widely and yet today more and more of our people stubbornly reject the Savior. They refuse to acknowledge Jesus as Christ and Lord. Like the people of those three Galilean cities, an ever greater number of our neighbors remain bound to and controlled by their own spiritual and intellectual pride. They are blind to their sin and deny their need for a Savior. The truth of the Gospel remains hidden to them and they choose to remain prisoners of the devil. And since prisoners in Jesus day were often bound by yokes like animals, you could say that a great many of our neighbors, friends and family members are in the yoke of the evil one. And the greatest peril for us as Christians is to think that we are somehow immune to it. That my friends would be a great mistake and it would be good for us to consider the words St. Paul has for us in this morning's epistle lesson: **So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**

That is a good question, a very good question, indeed. Who will deliver us from our sinful nature? Who will save us from ourselves?

Well, there is one and only one answer to that question and He is the one who speaks to us in our Gospel lesson today. Here is His humble invitation to you: **Come to me, all**

who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

"Come to me," says Jesus, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father but by me."

"Come to me," He says, "I have made final and full payment for all of your sins. They have been taken away from you as far as the East is from the West." Or as he said to the paralytic in Capernaum, before he healed him: **Take heart my son, your sins are forgiven.** And he says the same thing to you and me continually in his Holy Word and in the Sacrament of the Altar: **"Take, eat; this is my body given for you, for the remission of all your sins. Take, drink; this is my blood, shed for you, for the forgiveness of all your sin."**

And with His forgiveness comes true rest and true peace of mind. Our hearts no longer have to bear the burden of guilt and shame that we all carry. The accusing finger that the evil one points at us after we have succumb to his tempting and breaking of God's Law, withers before the imputed righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ, the righteousness and holiness that is now credited to us through faith in Him. Therefore we now stand, and on judgment day will stand, guiltless before God and all creation. Because we have put on Christ, our sins will not be counted against us since they have been washed away by the Blood of the Lamb.

And just as the power of sin over us has been broken, so is the power of death. Jesus proved this by His resurrection. He has risen victorious over the grave. And he will prove it again at the resurrection of all flesh. What greater rest could we have than that? Jesus Christ is and always has been the true Sabbath. There is no greater rest or peace of mind than knowing that physical death is not the end of the line for us or our loved ones, but only the beginning of eternity with our Lord.

This is why Jesus can say in all honesty that His yoke is easy and his burden light. By his grace He has taken care of everything. He has carried that cruel yoke, that old rugged cross on his shoulders up Calvary hill for us. It is just like Luther says so wonderfully in His explanation of the second article of the Apostle's creed as is found in the front of our hymnal (pages 322-323):

I believe that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary; and that He is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a

lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His inno-cent suffering and death; in order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness; even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

You see it is like the stories one hears of a courageous soldier who threw himself on a live hand grenade to save his friends. Jesus willingly bore the full blast of God's wrath against our sin so that by his death we might live. This is why St. Paul exclaims at the end of our epistle lesson after he has agonized over his pathetic sinfulness, **“Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Thanks be to God, indeed, that Jesus gave up His life to save us, because we certainly could not save ourselves. And, beloved, once we believe that and understand that, then we are empowered to endure anything that life has to throw at us: drought, hail, floods, financial hardship, illness, loneliness, sorrow, and even persecution unto death. That is how the martyrs of the early church and the reformation could go to their deaths rejoicing and singing hymns like the Doxology also known as “the old one hundredth”:

**Praise God from whom all blessing flow
Praise him all creatures here below
Praise him above ye heavenly Host
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

Yes, even for them the yoke of Christ was easy and the burden light, because they believed and they trusted in Him and not in themselves. In Him they found their rest, as shall we, when in the end, we finally lay our earthly burdens aside and joyfully run into the arms of our gentle and humble Lord and Savior, Jesus. To him be all the praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever. Amen.