

[OPENING SLIDE]

*"True and Lasting Rest"*

*"[Jesus says] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

*"Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of sorrows; it empties today of strength."* [Corrie Ten Boom]

**Introduction**

[SLIDE # 2] A somewhat arresting observation was made a number of years back in Martin Moore – Ede's book *The Twenty Four Hour Society*. He observed that some of the most notorious industrial accidents of his time occurred in the middle of the night. The Exxon Valdez, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and the fatal navigational error of Korean Air Lines 007 ... all after dark.

When the USS *Vincennes* shot down an Iranian A300 airbus killing all 290 people aboard, fatigue stressed operators in the Combat Information Center misinterpreted radar data and repeatedly told their captain that the jet was descending as if to attack, when, in fact the airliner was on a normal flight path.

In the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster, key NASA officials made the ill-fated decision to go ahead with the launch after working 20 hours straight and getting only a few hours of sleep the night before. Ede's contention? Their error in judgment cost the lives of 7 astronauts and nearly killed the U.S. space program.

It seems, we ignore our need for rest and renewal at the peril of ourselves and others. [PI, 233]

[SLIDE # 3] *"Come to me,"* Jesus invites ... not me *and* something else ... but to Jesus alone ... receiving His yoke of grace, mercy, peace ... and life ... life to the full!

**Main Point: Let us receive strength for the day, where in the present reality of God's gracious love for us in Christ, we are given ... rest.**

[SLIDE # 4]

NO MORE GRACIOUS AN INVITATION;; NO GREATER A PROMISE NO MORE  
BLESSED A GIFT!

Amen.

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[SLIDE # 5] THE MYSTERY OF FAITH REVEALED.

<sup>25</sup> *At that time* ["rejoicing in the Holy Spirit"<sup>1</sup>] *Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things* ["all that puts our harassed lives in order"<sup>2</sup>] *from the wise and understanding* [who "have no need of a physician"<sup>3</sup>] *and revealed them to little children* [those who say "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner"<sup>4</sup>]; <sup>26</sup> *yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.*

Faith ... being called into a loving relationship with our heavenly Father ... is all gift!

Not for those who think they've already got it all figured out [if that's the case, this sermon is not for you]! [SLIDE # 6] But those who have come to the end of themselves, those tired of striving, and have come to receive what the church Father Augustine saw: *"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless, until they find their rest in You."*

***This*** *"is the Father's good pleasure,"* Jesus thrills to share, "rejoicing" to share it, Luke says ... *"to give **you** the kingdom"* ... as in the waters of your Baptism ... to be yoked to you ... willing to meet you where you are ... in whatever state of your soul ... whatever your cares, your worries, your tireless striving.

[SLIDE # 7]

*"[Where] two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow ... a threefold cord is not quickly broken."*  
[Ecclesiastes 4:9-12]

Yes, who are the "three strands" but the precious Holy Trinity, wherein we also are bound by grace into that cord, given strength for the day ... for the hour!

[SLIDE # 8] THOUGH LIFE SURE DOES GET IN THE WAY OF THE VIEW!

Laborious ... heavy ... exhausting ... chafing ... those are Jesus' words!

Filled with clouds ... rain ... splinters ... broken cell phones ... bouts of loneliness ... Eddie's week off!

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:21

<sup>2</sup> Franzmann, *Follow Me*, 111

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 9:12

<sup>4</sup> Luke 18:13; Contrary to "those who think they have God by the toe," yet "have only the devil by the fist." [Bruner, *Matthew*, 431]

But it's bigger than that, where sometimes the pain of our past ... fears of our future ... and our present striving seek to derail us. Where even St. Paul is singing the blues [Romans 7:15b, 18a, 19, 24a]!

Indeed! We know what we're supposed to do, or what you're not supposed to do, but what happens? [Adapted from Krueger, *CPR*, 21:3, 22] We know who we long to be, but we're far from it. We know who we don't want to be, but we're nearer than we care to admit. "Our hell's and heaven's seemingly inches apart!" [Rich Mullinis]<sup>5</sup>

[SLIDE # 9] On our own, it's a dead end ... consigned to our striving ... "*darkness our only friend*" [Psalm 88:18] ... "*prisoners*" ... in a "*waterless pit*" [Zechariah 9:11]

"*Wretched man that I am,*" Paul openly admits in our epistle reading today. "*Who will deliver us from this body of death?*"

**"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"** [Romans 7:24-25a] WHO DELIVERS HELP, WHO DELIVERS HOPE! Where ... the Lord's "visits are the best" [Lundgren, *CPR*, 12:3, 28] ... and always right on time!

[SLIDE # 10]

<sup>28</sup> *Come to **me*** [Jesus says, "not me *plus* someone or something else, no, come to Me], *all who labor and are heavy laden, and **I** will give you rest* ["that shalom of Eden, through the sense of being at home, in the right place, when we stand at the foot of the cross and experience the breath of life that comes from heaven through His empty tomb"<sup>6</sup>].

*"I will give you rest"* ... no "pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps" ... "pulling our own weight" ... cooperating with God in *these* matters [or any for that matter]!

Yes, what keeps us bound? What causes the Christian to crouch? Paul David Tripp in his book *Suffering* suggests any number of things that deepen our pain, that slow the step, that cause faith to flee: doubt of God, unrealistic expectations of life, unrealistic expectations of others, pride, materialism, and selfism." [32-38]

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<sup>5</sup> LUTHER: Yes, "things are in a fine state, indeed, when the egg wants to be wiser than the hen. A fine governance it must be when the children want to rule their father and mother, and the fools and simpletons the wise people ... Conceit keeps the dance going." [1546, pp. 384, 386]

<sup>6</sup> Kolb

Wherein, Jesus' invitation cuts right to the heart, issuing forth the gracious and life-giving invitation to all "from whom the juice has gone out of life and all that is left is the rind." [Bruner, *Matthew*, 438]

[SLIDE # 11] Where, it's all on Jesus' shoulders ... our "cross-bearer."<sup>7</sup>

"Bench Press This" ... "His Pain, Your Gain." [*Reveal and wear T-shirt for rest of service.*]

In Him, and Him alone the finish line is crossed ... death is defeated ... Satan's lies dispelled ... victory won ... hope restored! As the Spirit works by grace through Baptism and the implanted, spoken, read, heard Word [Krueger, 22], our faith is breathed back to life, fanned into flame, "*so that your faith might not **rest** in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*" [1 Timothy 1:6; 1 Corinthians 2:5]

Now ...

*"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."* [Philippians 4:13]

Now, "There is a power at work in me that is stronger than myself, stronger than my sin." How do I know this? "Because I am a baptized child of God, and the Spirit of God does indeed live in me ... [who] is renewing His presence in me right now, as in faith I listen to His Word and trust His promise." [Yunker, *CPR*, 15:3, 31]

"Oh, what a pleasing weight that strengthens those who carry it! ... [For] we do not bear grace; grace bears us." [*Incomplete Work on Matthew*, Homily 29]

[SLIDE # 12] AND SO, child of God, TAKE HEART [a few words for the journey] ...

† As there is no longer any need to work towards grace, only to work *from* it.

Yes, with the cross ever before us, beckoning us onwards to bathe and bask in our Savior's grace, and its shadow always behind us, casting its gracious light on all we do ... work from Jesus' presence ... labor out of *His* forgiveness and *His* strength.

† Second, if I can co-opt St. Paul here: "*No [burden] has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be [burdened] beyond your ability, but with the [burden] he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*" [1 Corinthians 10:13]

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<sup>7</sup> "Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life ... instead of offering escape, Jesus offers equipment." [Bruner, 436]

For, again, Jesus has done it all ... carrying the burden of every short-coming ... keeping all the rules ... taking the weight of your sin and mine, of your failures and mine, still graciously interceding on our behalf! Lean on, and into Him!

† Where, all things come about “*ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ* ... at that [appointed] time!”

SPURGEON: “Receive what [God] is going to give you, and take gratefully the painful preliminaries. High palaces must have deep foundations, and it takes a long time to excavate a human soul so deep that God can build a gorgeous palace of grace therein!” [“Faith among Mockers,” in *For All the Saints*, 2:235-237]

With such grace at work in our lives, and such strength sufficient for the day:

*“I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may **rest** upon me ... For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* [2 Corinthians 12:9-10]

### **Conclusion**

[SLIDE # 13] Bruce Larson, in *Believe and Belong*, recalls one of the ways he helped folks struggling under the weight of self, to lay themselves at Jesus’ feet; counseling them from his New York City office to walk with him from his office down to the RCA Building on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. There, in the entrance of that building is a gigantic statue of Atlas, a beautifully proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, bearing the weight of the world upon his shoulders. There he is, the most powerfully built man in the world, and he can barely stand up under this burden.

[SLIDE # 14] Then, Larson would invite them to walk to the other side of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. to St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and there behind the altar is a tiny shrine of the boy Jesus, 8 or 9 years old, who with no effort at all, is holding the world in one hand, bidding us blessing and peace! Point made!

“To all who have grown exhausted with effort to be accepted by God, to those who are sick and tired of trying to deserve God’s favor by leading a good life, to all who are weary of wrecking their own eternal future, the invitation comes, *‘I will give you rest.’*” [Andreasen, *CPR*, 9:3, 25] Giving us Himself, at no cost to us, but simply to be received in faith.

### **[SLIDE # 15]**

REST ... NO MORE GRACIOUS AN INVITATION IS ISSUED,, NO GREATER A PROMISE IS ASSURED, AND NO MORE BLESSED A GIFT IS GIVEN.

*Amen.*

*[FRIDAY E-MAIL:]* As we have just celebrated the 246<sup>th</sup> birthday of our country, we have once again been treated to a host of images of the flag of our country prominently displayed, where, visitors to the Smithsonian Museum of American History can see the actual flag that flew over Ft. McHenry when Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1814. The immense size of flag [42 feet x 30 feet] is what allowed Key to behold it from his position ten miles out to sea, following a night of gunfire.

Wherein, the means by which the flag was supported has fairly recently been discovered. The 189 foot pole on which the flag was flown was supported by two oak timbers, 8 feet by 8 feet, joined as a cross. National park Service personnel discovered this cross-shaped support near the entrance to Ft. McHenry in 1959 buried 9 feet in the ground. Not only did the cross piece help rangers locate the original site from which the flag flew, it answered the mystery of how such a large flag could fly in stormy weather without snapping the pole. This unseen wooden cross beams provided a firm foundation for the symbol of our national freedom.

*"Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,"* Jesus says, in our Gospel reading for this coming Sunday from **Matthew 11:25-30**.

***"Come to me*** [not me *plus* someone or something else], ***all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*** ["that shalom of Eden, through the sense of being at home, in the right place, when we stand at the foot of the cross and experience the breath of life that comes from heaven through His empty tomb" says one author]. ***Take my yoke*** [of grace, mercy and peace] ***upon you, and learn from*** [*from*, not about] ***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."***

No truer an invitation has ever been issued; no greater promise ever assured. Wherein, to all looking for rest, to all who have grown exhausted with the tireless striving in this world, to all in need of refuge from the toil of trying to keep it all together, "to all who are weary of wrecking their own eternal future," the invitation comes, *"I will give you rest."*

*"All who are self-sufficient need not apply."* But only those who are *"bruised reeds, and smoldering wicks."* [Matthew 12:20] Where, only in one place, and in one person can the promise being offered be fully realized. His name is Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus! He alone has "the credentials to back up this claim?" *Rest ...* for today ... and for all of your tomorrows. SYOS!