



3rd Sunday After Pentecost, July 3, 2011 “But I’m Not Tired!”

Texts: Zechariah 9:9-12; Psalm 145:8-14; Romans 7:15-25; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

*Prayer: Bless this word proclaimed, and we who hear it, O Lord,
that we may find our rest in you. Amen.*

In April of this year, the Glover household received a brief, overnight visit from our daughter Cindy; son-in-law Rick; granddaughter Paige; and our fifteen month old grandson, Logan. It was well after nine o'clock on a Friday evening when they arrived. Rick had been up since four in the morning. After bringing suitcases and toys from the car into the house, he quickly made his way to the guest room.

Paige, on the other hand, had other ideas about how she would spend her time. One would think that after having sat in first grade all day, then spending another four and a half hours on a car trip entertaining her parents, younger brother, and herself, that she would be tired. Paige was anything but tired as she proceeded to explore Grandma and Grandpa's new house.

Paige began by making sure her toy box had arrived with us from Mifflintown. Content to see that it had, Paige shared legos with Logan. The only string attached that Logan did not like was that he had to play with the legos in the way Paige wanted him to play and not in the way he wanted to play with them. Paige discovered the Yahtzee game on the closet shelf. She wanted to play Yahtzee as she played legos with Logan. At the same time she wanted to play Yahtzee, she wanted me to read her a book, then teach her how to play cribbage (which her mom and Grandfather were doing), color, clean the grapes from the refrigerator, and help in the making of scrambled eggs.

All of these activities were happening at once – or as much as at once as possibly could happen. Vaughn and I felt as though we were watching a ping pong table ricochet off the walls of our house. We could not keep up! We began to grow tired watching her!

As the night wore on, it became apparent that Paige was growing tired. She began to rub her eyes. When she would be asked to put away her toys, there was a resistance in doing what she had been asked to do. If the suggestion came up that it was time for bed because the next day was going to be a long day, the response back was “I’m not tired”.

When Paige's head did finally hit the pillow, she was out very quickly, without a care in the world.

The lessons for today reminded me of Paige that night.

First, Paul writes about the good he wants to do being what he does not do; and the bad that he does not want to do being that which ends up getting done. Paul writes about his experience, which, when we are brutally honest with ourselves, is also our human experience. It is those times in our lives where we know – we even say, “I should be doing this, but I need to do this”. Or those times in life we look back and think, or say, “I had wanted to do this”, or, “I had intended to do this, but did this instead.” There are times where the thoughts are good, but the actions are nowhere near the thoughts. There are times we want to be loving to our spouse, children, parent, or other family member, only to find ourselves short in temper, time, or love. There may be times we intend to keep in touch with family members or friends who live a distance away, only to spend the time we would have in doing something else. There are times we may intend to help another person, only to be side-tracked by a long delayed task or project.

Like Paige, we may run ourselves ragged, doing the things we do not necessarily want to do, rather than the things we ought to be doing. In the midst of running ourselves ragged, trying to accomplish everything on our growing list of things to do, trying to live up to the expectations others or ourselves have placed upon us, or fearful we may perhaps miss something if we do not show up, we may easily find ourselves at the point of exhaustion.

When we reach that point, we may feel as though we are ready to collapse, but cannot possibly continue. At the same time, we may tell ourselves, “I’m not tired”, or we may push ourselves to do more than we possibly can by reminding ourselves, “. . . must. . . keep. . . going. . .”

In those times of near exhaustion and collapse, we miss Jesus’ invitation to “come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is an invitation to seek shelter, refuge, and rest in Jesus. But there are times where we may not hear it as an invitation, but rather as a command to stop everything and come to Jesus.

When we give in to sin, when we pursue things that we think will make us happy and they do not, Jesus’ words serve as both a gentle command and an invitation. Jesus’ words are a gentle command to turn away from the yoke of sin, and to be free in Christ. Being free from the yoke of sin means to turn away from the things that prevent us from being focused on God. Being free from the yoke of sin means to lay aside our burdens, our cares, our worries.

Patiently, gently, and lovingly, Jesus extends this invitation to us, even in those times we fail to listen. Even in those times where we are wrapped up in what we are doing, that like a child nearing their bedtime and having too much fun pleads, “just a few more minutes, please??”

The invitation Jesus extends to rest is a rest from the things that keep us from being in relationship with God. It is a rest from the worries and weariness of life. It is a rest from the struggles that weigh us down. This rest is a rest from the physical constraints of aging as well as the busy-ness of life that can leave us often running on empty. Eventually, this rest Jesus invites us to is a rest that is eternal and of peace.

We are reminded in the hymn, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus?” (Lutheran Book of Worship, #439. @1978 by Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, and The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod):

*Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge – Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In his arms he’ll take and shield you; You will find a solace there.*

Taking rest in Jesus is indeed a source of refuge, shelter, comfort, and strength. Resting in Jesus is a lot like a sleeping child – no worries, but peace and comfort. It is a matter of knowing the cares of the day are gone, that the child is “safe and secure from all alarm” (“Leaning On The Everlasting Arms” in With One Voice. @1995).

In the busy-ness of our lives, we need to take time for rest and for relaxation. Studies show that taking time for rest and relaxation reduces stress, and can prevent life threatening illness. Studies also show that rest and relaxation can be helpful in balancing busy schedules, maintaining healthy relationships, and finding new perspectives to problems that might bother us.

All too often, though, we think this rest and relaxation happens only when we are on vacation. This rest that Jesus invites us to does not have to happen solely while at the mountains or on the shore, but even at home. The invitation to rest is extended to all, regardless of reasons why we might choose to ignore this rest.

In 1883, Emma Lazarus, a Jewish poet living between New York and Rhode Island, wrote a poem to help raise money for the building of the base of the Statue of Liberty. Initially, she refused to write the poem, but was convinced by a friend that those who saw the poem would be inspired by both the words and the statue accompanying it. Emma Lazarus entitled this poem, "The New Colossus". She began the poem by referring to the Colossus of Rhodes – an ancient statue of the Greek god Helios (meaning light) that stood over one hundred feet tall (100) before it was destroyed by earthquake in 226 B.C. She continued the poem by comparing the Colossus of Rhodes as a conquering figure to Lady Liberty, as she has been known through the years, as a welcoming figure:

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-abridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"* (from <http://www.statueliberty.net/statue-of-liberty-poem.html>)

Over the years, the Statue of Liberty has been a welcome sight to those who have arrived on the shores of North America seeking employment, refuge, shelter, or a chance to begin anew. On a larger perspective, God, who is rich in mercy, extends an invitation for all who are tired, poor, huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, the homeless, the forsaken, and the humble.

May the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the one true faith, now and always, so that you may always find rest in Him. Amen.