

"Some Rest Would Be Nice"

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Romans 7:15-25a; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
14th Ord. -- July 9, 2017

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 (NRSV) So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. {35} The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. {36} And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. {37} My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; {38} but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.'

"I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! {43} I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink," {44} and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also"--let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.' {45} "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' {46} She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. {47} Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. {48} Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. {49} Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left."

And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." {59} So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. {60} And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes." {61} Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. {62} Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. {63} Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. {64} And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, {65} and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. {66} And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. {67} Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Romans 7:15-25 (NRSV) I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. {16} Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. {17} But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. {18} For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. {19} For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. {20} Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. {21} So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. {22} For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, {23} but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. {24} Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? {25} Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 (NRSV)

¹⁶“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ¹⁷“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All 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. ²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Disclaimer: Prayer:

Summertime and the living is supposed to be a little easier, when the kids are out of school, when for the most part the weather, save for the heat and humidity lends, itself to outdoor activity, is supposed to be a time with the unstated goal of stepping back and taking a little vacation, or at least a deep breath or two, a picnic or a paddle on a lake, a walk on the beach or a cool drink of your choice in the cool of the evening.

The truth is halfway through the year, we need some vacation, we need some rest. We as a nation made it to the 4th of July which is kind of the unofficial mid-year point when we are supposed to take a break from our divisions and from our differences to celebrate what we hold in common. To think for a day or two about unity. About the commonality of being citizens of the good old USA. To sing the same songs. Be on the same page. Celebrate the same heritage. We need this. But, it doesn't last long.

This great nation with its vast beauty and immense energy filled with amazingly capable people and unlimited potential seems to be pretty weary. Weary to the point of near exhaustion. Weary and in need of rest. It's been a tough first half of the year filled with an excess amount of upheaval, political and otherwise, filled with a giant cocktail of optimism and pessimism depending upon to whom you listen.

We are a people of greatness and we are a people with deep problems. But maybe what we are in our hearts is a people who are weary. Weary to the point of

crankiness or maybe even anger. Even weary to a point of intolerance and meanness. Weary to the point of near exhaustion. Weary. Weary of war. Weary of the constant threat of some unseen foe. Weary of the constant pedantic arguing back and forth between the opposite aisles of the houses of congress who seem to be concerned about everything but the people who sent them there. Weary of name calling and scandal and talking heads on cable news. Poor people are tired of having to scrape through the bottom of the top drawer to get enough coins for the kids a popsicle and people of means are tired of hearing about poor people. We're weary of being stuck in a rut of apathy and anxiety. We're sick and tired of being sick and tired. We're exhausted by the drone of the 11 o'clock news that seems to take such delight in bringing the reality of human misery and sadness into our homes. We're drained by human conflicts and their toll, be they foreign or domestic. We're exhausted by the constant threat of the next act of terror, or the next multiple shooting, or the next hate crime. We're despondent over the inability of a world that can create a hand held instrument that can put us, visually, speaking to someone on the other side of the world, but we can't figure out how to feed the world's hungry, or care for our elderly, or prevent the desecration and victimization of children and women, that allows slavery, yes, slavery to be a reality in our culture.

I know, hush, enough it's wearisome just hearing it. We're tired of being tired of being tired...

Some of us, not nearly enough, bring our weariness to God. Those of us in

the God business wonder how we can get more to come, thinking that just maybe if more pews were filled then them maybe we could lessen the epidemic of anxiety out there in the world. We know that when people, like us, gather in church we in an environment in which we are able to share with each other the weariness of our pain and bear our burdens together. We can commiserate with each other and express our weariness concerning people we know and love, our sisters and brothers, who are weary of the struggle with illness, who bear the burden of care for ones they love, who are encumbered by anxiety and depression and grief, who are out of work, who are dealing with the deterioration of someone they love, a relationship they thought would last forever, a faith that is stretched to its limits.

We need some rest. The thing is, the kind of rest we need just can't be manipulated or manufactured or planned with the help of your friendly travel agent, or discovered on some app. In fact the kind of rest we need has more to do with letting go of the control of our living than furiously planning. In our sinful selves we keep bumping up against the singular sin that drives us further and further from that place of rest and peace we so desire. It is that mantra, "I can do it myself...I can fix it myself....I don't need anyone else....". Paul said it this way, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." We continuously talk about the harm others can bring to us when in all the world our own worst enemy, the greatest threat to our well being, the very person that keeps us captive, the one who keeps us from peace, true happiness, contentment ... is me.

And in all the world, there is only one true solution to me. Only one freedom ringing for me. It isn't about patriotism or politics, it isn't about pride or productivity, it is about Jesus.

We are caught somewhere between wanting to believe in grace that will lead to joy and celebration and even dancing in the streets -- and our inability to believe that anything -- even from God is that good -- so the dirge continues. We want to be able to bolster our faith and hitch our star, like Rebekah, to someone we've never laid our eyes on, with just a promise to go on, but it is difficult to make ourselves give up – **me**.

Thank God that Jesus knows us so well that he offers us, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

When we can't manage to do that which we need to do -- when we can't seem to keep ourselves from doing that which we should not -- when we struggle with the inconsistencies of our theology and the practice of our faith -- when we are faced with the perturbing problems of modern life as we express the desire for unity and community, but continue to do things that speak of isolation and exclusivity -- when we find ourselves at odds with the world in which we live -- when we need desperately to believe in the freedom of grace and accept that which God offers us in Christ – Jesus gives us exactly what we need. He says, 'come to me.'

Is there anything better than 'come to me?' A mom opens her arms to the 3 year old that is exhausted from a day's play with an eye on more to do, and says, 'come to me.' A dad looks into the pained eyes of a young person trying desperately to be all grown up who just isn't ready to be all grown up and says, 'come to me.' A spouse says to the one known better than any other who has that 'I can't take much more,' look and says, arms open, 'come to me.' When the ebb and flow of life have ebbed and flowed their last Jesus says, "Come to me."

Today, right now, in this place, through this word, in our need, in our weariness, Jesus stands in our midst and says, 'come to me.' 'Come to me and share your burden -- take up a yoke with me, you don't have to pull this load all by yourselves.'

Come to me in this place of font and table steeped in the promise of healing waters and Christ's body and blood given and I will give you rest with no restrictions. Come to me and find the unrestrained grace of the God who loves us all with no exclusion, no exception. Come to me and let me take the burden of sin from you. Come to me and let me love you and I will give you rest.

Don't you wish it was that simple? Some rest would be nice.