

Beloved saints at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

How is your search coming? All around us and within ourselves we find ourselves searching for answers. Let's be honest, you want to know a ton of answers. There those that look to education and man's wisdom, looking to math, science, some to the arts, and some looking into history, looking for the answers to life. We find ourselves delving into the vast knowledge and wisdom of Google and Wikipedia, skimming through self-help books, all in search of the answers.

Let's start with the question though. Earlier in this same chapter we see that it had been asked of Jesus, "are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" Are you the promised Messiah Jesus, the Son of God, where peace and rest are to be found? Do you have for us the meaning of life? Can you tell us why we endure suffering? The questions go on and on, and though they are all different they get at the same thing, who is God, and what is the answer to sin, death, and the devil.

And sometimes, hearing the words of our Lord read and as they are preached in various places can leave us in even more of a puzzle. Sure, we've heard it over and over that our suffering, the things troubling us are a result of sin. Sure we know we deserve death and hell, but I'm here in America now and death has not overcome me, where do I find peace and rest? Where do find peace and rest from the tribulations of sin in this life?

We hear the Words of our Lord say, "come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What's this all about? Jesus is supposed to make burdens lighter, make things easier, right? How come then there are disasters, why is my loved on in and out of the hospital with various health issues, why is paying my bills a struggle, and everything seems to be falling apart?

For all the wisdom and knowledge that can be obtained, in this world you will not find rest. Despite all the soul searching, various forms of spirituality cannot meditate and bring peace and rest. Even those who have different struggles not dealing with the economy or health have their sins and struggles. And with all that can be learned and studied, historians are doomed to repeat the past – doomed to sin and death. On our own we will cannot find rest.

We try and find substitutes and try and provide our own rest. Some obsess about their work and projects to find rest from the others cares of daily life. More likely, we obsess about our vacations. We work and struggle to save in order that we can lavish away in some other destination, thinking we can provide ourselves rest. We may concern ourselves with a time out watching our favorite sports team or we may treasure with highest esteem our time with family and friends and find these things more restful than our time in our Father's house.

When we think of rest, we think of relaxation and perhaps peaceful scenes come to mind. Think of those destinations and places where we think we can find rest. Outside in rest and relaxation or the family room that is peaceful and relaxing. Not long and various insects and flying things cause you to look foolish as you swat them away, as the sun bears down on you leaving you thirsty and skin burning. Or the voices of children and grandchildren wanting a different channel, or the smell coming in from outside, or some other complaint. Or as you vacation you find yourself quarreling over which shops or event to go to, or how long you will stay out.

This is the reality of our restful scenes. They are quickly damaged by the sin in our lives. Christ does not say, "come to me, and I'll put you on a nice cruise or give you a lazy chair and a big screen so you can take it easy." We often fail to understand true Sabbath rest which Christ speaks of because we often forget the burden under which we toil is sin. Yes, the cares and concerns of this world are hard and heavy, but they are brought on by our sin. You are in need of real rest.

Jesus does not give us these words so that we can avoid great suffering. He gives us these words in the midst of our great sufferings. He comes to bring you His rest. He calls you to come and take His yoke upon you. The yoke of Christ barely qualifies for a yoke. A yoke is made to pull something. The yoke must attach the cattle to wagon or a cart. Christ's yoke, however, is not laden with anything. There is nothing to pull! Christ has pulled the wagonload of your sins to the cross and dumped them there. In a weird twist, the cattle driver has taken the yoke of the oxen, that is your yoke, and has turned you out into the verdant green pastures of His righteousness.

In the midst of your suffering he takes your burden and says, your sins are forgiven. When everything is falling around us, when we wonder how we are even going to make it through tomorrow, Jesus is bearing the heaviness, promising that your burden is upon him. Death will come, but he has overcome

death for you. Rest comes for your soul, when your world is falling apart and you wonder where God is, he is here for you, forgiving you, and restoring you.

All the knowledge and searching within ourselves and this world will not do this. The answer has been given the entire time. "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants."

The answer to these questions is given as our Lord proclaims, "come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Your labor that you bear is your sin, Jesus is calling you unto himself. Jesus doesn't reveal some secret knowledge or some secret way by which you are worthy to participate in His eternal life. There is no work to be done but He comes and pours Himself over you. From your infancy you have been given the answer. The answer to your search is revealed to you in your baptism as water is combined with God's Word to give you forgiveness and restores you to life. Here Jesus tells you, your sins are forgiven for I have taken your burden of sin and death and you bear my yoke which is easy and light for sin and death are not dragging behind.

Our world is broken, and we need an answer to sin and death. In His love and mercy, our Lord still uses and loves this world. You are His and He has claimed you as His own. Your relationship with God is perfectly restored through the gifts the Son gives in His death and resurrection. Here, in the midst of suffering and death, for you is Christ, right here, right now, giving you true Sabbath rest.

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.