

Rest for the Weary Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus knew who he was. He knew who he was destined to be. He didn't believe himself to be the Son of God by some strange sense of intuition, but rather by confirmation. Think about the miraculous conception of Christ. When he began to grow, there would have been his mother telling him the story of his conception and birth over and over again (Luke 2:26-38). Remember that story when Mary and Joseph "misplaced" Jesus? They turned and looked at one another saying, "I thought he was with you?! No... I thought he was with your cousin?!!!" Not lost for a few minutes, not for a few hours, but two days they lost track of him. When they finally found him in the temple he said, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house? Why would you search for me?" (Luke 2:49) Growing up he knew who he was. Do you remember when he was baptized and not only did the dove land on his shoulder, but God spoke from heaven saying, "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). If you weren't sure before, you would certainly know then. You see, not only did Jesus know who he was, he knew who he would become.

In the temple meeting when he was hanging around his hometown, he was asked to speak and he read this passage: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, NIV). After he read this prophecy from Isaiah 61:1-2a, all the people were fixed on Jesus and he said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21, NIV). The people heard his words, but they didn't understand them. This Scripture from Isaiah Jesus read was one of power as God proclaims that he will bring justice back to the world again, comfort for those due it, and vengeance for those due that as well (Isaiah 61:2b). Yet, despite this prophecy of power, in Isaiah 53 we find a prophecy of pain as it details the suffering God's servant would endure, and all to bring peace and reconciliation back between God and man. It says that in order for his savior to bring about salvation, he must give of himself. If Jesus was to be the savior the Scriptures called him to be, one day a reigning king, he first had to suffer greatly. He knew he could not embrace one without the other.

In the passage we have read this morning, Jesus is seeing John's suffering and knows his is soon to come. To embrace his future glory, he would first have to follow God's pre-determined plan of present suffering. When Jesus thanks God in verse 25 that he has hidden "these things" from the wise and understanding, he is speaking to the confirmation of his mission and purpose. When Jesus reads and reflects on the prophecies of old and sees himself, he also sees the rejection by the people who are calling out for the savior. They wanted God's redemption, they wanted to be saved from their situation, but they rejected God's plan. The ones who claimed to know the most, the religious elite – the preachers, teachers, avid students of Scriptures – were the ones that led the rebellion. Those with understanding were the ones in the dark. So then, who really knew who Jesus was? Who knew what he came to do???... The ones whose hearts were pure. Jesus said even "childlike." Why? Later in Matthew's gospel Jesus said, "Let the little children come to

me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14, NIV). Why does Jesus say to come to him, to see God in this manner? Because the heart of a child is pure and willing to trust not those who share their opinion, because they don't have one. Not those who are of a higher social standard, because they don't understand this man-made concept at such a young age. No, they are willing to trust most anyone who approach them in a warm and inviting manner. This is the only way we can ever begin to accept the will of God as Jesus did. We have to open our hearts and minds fully to his leading. And that's hard, isn't it?

We have a lot going on in our lives. We are trying to keep up with this and keep up with that. We have to attend this school event, this sporting event, we have to keep up with the house, the yard, the dog, the cat, we even have to find time in all of that to go to church, to read our Bibles, and to pray. But guess what, God knows that. He knows what is going on in our lives and how hard this situation or that situation may be. He knows our greatest joys in life, but he also knows our deepest sorrows. That's why he asks us to trust him. That's why he calls out to us who are weary and heavy laden. Jesus tells us we can find rest in him if we free our minds to trust in his plan, his will for our lives. Those plans to prosper us, and not to harm us (Jeremiah 29:11). Here is the reality, though, like a child, God knows we are going to take baby steps toward him. He is calling us away from the busyness of the world and our lives to the ease of his way of living, because he knows his way is best.

Now, we know the reality of the Christian life. It is challenging, difficult, testing, and trying. God has told us that in his word. So here's what he has promised to do: he has not said he would take it all away, but he would help us bear the load. In an ox's yoke, there is a spot for two to work side by side to pull the cart or the plow that they may bear the load together. When they are both together, they can't be stopped, even when one is growing weak. It can rest as the other pulls on. God wants to help bear your load of life. He wants to provide help for us who are weary, battered, and bruised. When others promised to help and were no where to be found, God will always be there. No longer will you be bear your load all on your own, God will be pressing-on with you. He will teach us how to properly bear the load. He will show us that he will do much of the work and lead us through the tough spots if we will just walk beside him. It's not an overnight process of giving over to God's leading, but a learning process. The question is, are we willing to learn or are we too independent, too knowledgeable, too worldly to trust that God has a better plan? That his will for our lives is better than anything we could ever dream up on our own?

The call to rest for the weary was Jesus' call then as well as now. In his life he was heavy laden with the knowledge of what was ahead of him, the pain of the cross, and the the crushing effects of bearing the sin of all mankind, but this childlike trust in God's plan that he calls us to is the same he had when he prayed in the garden before his crucifixion, "Father, not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Even in his pain of body, mind, and soul he followed God's plan that we still benefit from today. So come to Jesus all of you who are weary, learn from him how to trust God, even with your life.