

The 6th Sunday after Pentecost

“The Best Invitation Ever”

Matthew 11:28-30

July 9, 2023

Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 6th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 11:28-30

“28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

So far the text...

Have you received an invitation recently? “Come to my child’s one year birthday party!” Come to the reception of my oldest who just graduated from high school!”

Have you been invited to go to a wedding this summer? A retirement celebration? A day at the beach? Or just an informal backyard BBQ with friends? When you receive an invitation, it’s always nice to know someone was thinking about you, and you try your best to honor that invitation.

Of course, the next questions that come to mind are: “Are there any commitments that would keep me from going?” “What gift or side dish should I bring?” And, of course, “what to wear?” Get togethers are fun, but at the same time they can also sometimes be a little stressful. You juggle your family schedule a little bit to make it work for everybody, and you take the time to get a special gift for the occasion.

Did you know that Jesus has given you a very special ongoing invitation to each of us?

**“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
(Matthew 11:28)**

What do you hear in this invitation? More stress? No, Jesus invites you to come to Him to be relieved from stress. He doesn't tell you to bring a gift. He is the gift giver! He invites you to bring your heavy burdens and He promises to give you rest – rest for your soul, that is!

Jesus invites you to come to Him and give Him the heavy burden of all your sins that weigh on your conscience and are impossible to remove on your own. And notice, that this invitation is to all people, because we **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (Romans 3:23)**

But God then tells us of the most amazing thing He did for all people through His Son Jesus. **“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:24)**

God is thinking about you by giving you this invitation of rest and peace for your soul. Jesus knows all that you're going through in your life and the guilt you are carrying. And He simply says “Come”. “I want you to give Me all the sin that is stressing your soul and I'll give you rest!”

How could Jesus promise this to you? It's because Jesus really did take your place at the worst gathering ever! He took your place on the cross and there suffered the torment of hell and the wrath of His Father to cancel your debt completely. The Bible tells us this in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

“For He (God the Father) made Him (God's Son Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Jesus' invitation to you is His promise to take away all your soul's stress by making you righteous. What to wear? Again, no problem! This is a stress free invitation! Jesus gives you His robe of righteousness!

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” (Isaiah 61:10)

So, what does Jesus invite you to do? Trust Him. Say “Yes!” in your heart to His gracious invitation to come to Him daily!

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from 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.” (Matthew 11:29-30)

And when you accept His invitation by the power of the Holy Spirit, God connects you to Himself through faith. You are yoked with the greatest Friend who ever lived!

As we have been hearing the lessons from Matthew, this beautiful picture is repeated over and over. Jesus is the Friend of sinners. He yokes Himself to sinners by faith, takes away their sins and sends them on His mission to save the lost.

So we heard in the calling of Matthew, the tax collector, these words from chapter 10.

“10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

As you and I daily repent of the sickness of our sins, Jesus, the Doctor of our souls, takes this heavy burden away and heals our souls, giving us rest. Those who believe they are righteous and can carry their own heavy burden of sin will be crushed by the weight of it. But when you and I daily hear Jesus’ call to repent, He gives us His righteousness. And that’s where we find rest – in Jesus!

James 2:23 tells us of how Abraham, the father of believers was made righteous – through faith in his Friend Jesus.

“And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.”

Through faith Abraham was yoked with God just as you and I are, and our souls are given Jesus' righteousness. It's counted toward you -100%.

Now, was Abraham called by God to show forth his faith? Oh yes, of course, in the most difficult way possible! He was told by God to sacrifice his son, Isaac. If Abraham had rejected what God told him to do, his faith would have been dead. As we know from James 2:20, **"faith without works is dead"**

But, Abraham was yoked to God to do whatever God called him to do. He believed that if this was God's will, God was able to resurrect his son as we know from Hebrews 11:18. He willingly went to sacrifice Isaac and was stopped at the last moment.

The Angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Son of God said in Genesis 22:
"11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

So he said, "Here I am."

12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

The incarnate Jesus, made the sacrifice, the only sacrifice that could pay for all the world's sins and give rest to our souls. You can trust Him who gave the supreme sacrifice for you! Will He not also help you in all your testing for your good?

So, yoked to Jesus through faith in Him, you also are tested. You are tested to trust Him in the difficult situations in your life.

And through His Word, the Bible, you will learn from Him through your testing. You will learn who Jesus is...gentle and compassionate. You will learn again and again what He has graciously done for you by His death on the cross and His resurrection! His yoke is easy for He's done it all for you!

What is your greatest fear? Your greatest stress? Is it being invited to go to a funeral because it reminds you of your own mortality? Yoked to Jesus' resurrection, He takes away this fear!

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 4:14)

Jesus invites you to come and rest – rest your soul in His love and forgiveness – rest in His embrace when your body sleeps in the grave... and then Jesus will awake you to ... a never-ending celebration in heaven! Yes, that’s the best invitation ever! And it’s yours to accept and live right now!

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)