



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, July 5, 2020

A Standing Invitation

by Garland F. Pierce

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

11:16 "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

11:17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon';

11:19 the 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."

11:25 At 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;

11:26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

11:27 All 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.

11:28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

11:29 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.

11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Have you found any rest during this time of pandemic? Some folks have confessed that one of the unexpected blessings during this time of disruption has been more time to pause and rest. Still others have complained that they are busier now more than ever and that rest is hard to find.

Discipleship is marked by work. Fanny J. Crosby wrote, "To the work! To the work! We are servants of God, let us follow the path that our Master has trod; With the balm of His counsel our strength to renew, let us do with our might what our hands find to do. Toiling on, toiling on. Let us hope and trust, let us watch and pray, and labor til the Master comes. (AMECH # 392) Life requires effort, particularly in the face of pandemic and oppression. For those of us fueled by a justice-seeking faith, we know that liberation is not for the lazy.

In Matthew's gospel, tired, wearied souls hear and perceive a gracious and welcomed invitation from Jesus, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Just before this invitation, Jesus, God's only begotten son, after marveling at the unwillingness of the so called wise of the world to accept him or his message, declares in his prayer of thanksgiving that he has authority and that he and God share the ultimate intimate relationship, God deeply knows him and he deeply knows God. Then, Jesus extends this invitation, "If you are tired, weary, come unto me."

What do you expect this rest to look like? Sandy beaches? A relaxing, quiet place to sit, to lie down, or lounge? Jesus continues, "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 one thinks of rest, a yoke probably is not involved. Discipleship requires work; but, the burden of it is not ours to bear alone. The hands and labor of the community of faith should help us to bear the burden. Though we do not gather physically in our edifices at this time, the church still gathers in worship, prayer, and service, helping to bear each other's burdens. The standing invitation is that Christ stands beside us, walking and working beside us, unequally yoked, carrying far more of the burdens of this world than we can even imagine or could ever possibly carry on our own.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share/write down—When you think of the rest that you need right now, what does it look and feel like?

PRAY: Gracious God, thank you for your love that calls and invites us to come. Thank you for Jesus bearing the weight that we can not bear alone. We will work; and, we will rest in order that we might gain strength to rise again and work for your justice and peace throughout the world. In the name of our burden-bearer and heavy-load sharer, Jesus, we pray. AMEN

ACT:

1. Who do you know that is in desperate need of a moment of rest? Come up with a simple way that you and perhaps others can help them get a little bit of the rest they desperately need.
2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.
3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

I Must Tell Jesus
AMEC Hymnal, #388

1. I must tell Je-sus all of my tri-als;
I can-not bear these bur-dens a-lone;
In my dis-tress He kind-ly will help me;
He ev-er loves and cares for His own.

Refrain

*I must tell Je-sus! I must tell Je-sus! I can-not bear my bur-dens a-lone;
I must tell Je-sus! I must tell Je-sus! Je-sus can help me, Je-sus a-lone.*

2. I must tell Je-sus all of my trou-bles;
He is a kind, com-pas-sion-ate friend;
If I but ask Him, He will de-liv-er,
Make of my trou-bles quick-ly an end.

Refrain

3. Tempt-ed and tried, I need a great Sav-ior,
One who can help me bur-dens to bear;
I must tell Je-sus, I must tell Je-sus;
He all my cares and sor-rows will share.

Refrain

4. O how the world to e-vil al-lures me!
O how my heart is tempt-ed to sin!
I must tell Je-sus, and He will help me
O-ver the word the vic-tory to win.

Refrain

Alternate Song: *Come unto Me*: <https://youtu.be/YgfXnleHjgU>
Sung by Take 6

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.