I love the story of a young mother with three children who receives a wonderful playpen for the kids from her mother.

She loves it so that in her thank you note she writes:

“Dear Mom, thank you so much for the playpen::

It’s being used every day from 2 to 3pm.

At 2pm
I get into it
to sleep

and the children can’t get near me!”

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I imagine for the Parents of our baptismal children…

- Courtney and Brooks
- Sara and Barnwell
- Meredith and Walker
• You might like to curl up right now and get some sleep in a play pen!

**Well, for all of us,** January and February have been intense.

From our

  o leadership conference

  o to the Global Impact Celebration,

  o to the Anglican Leadership Institute..

An incredible month of ministry, but leaving many of us a bit breathless!

If you’re here this morning needing rest, this sermon is for you…

Now don’t take that the wrong way, I don’t want you to sleep through it! But Rest is important!

It’s why God made it the 4th Commandment…

Honor the Sabbath and keep it holy..why?

**Our souls need to catch up with our bodies!!!**

And this is where the Jews were in the book of Zechariah.

As we continue our Gospel Project march through Scripture,

**There is no other prophet in the Old Testament that gives more hope that one day soon, God will bring rest and rescue through Jesus Christ.**

Zechariah is speaking to some very exhausted Jews after the exile.

They are back in Jerusalem busy farming and herding through a long season of drought and uncertainty. Some in the Spirit of Haggai are just about to begin the rebuilding of the Temple against the odds of adversaries..

So the Jews are:

  • Tired
  • discouraged
  • and a bit fearful, which is why Zechariah’s news as a prophet is so profound.

Zechariah delivers more prophecies about Jesus than nearly any other book in the Old Testament!
Including his prediction that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey…
But most importantly for today,

Zechariah promises that through Jesus we would be given:

- true rest
- true peace...
- how?

Through the blood covenant…That just as God made a lifesaving blood covenant with the Jews at Passover…Jesus would make an eternal life saving blood covenant with us producing true rest.

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500 years later, The Gospel of Matthew is Zechariah’s fulfillment!

In Matthew 21, Jesus does come into Jerusalem a final time on a Palm Sunday donkey.

And in today’s Chapter 11 of Matthew, Jesus fulfills the two other promises of Zechariah regarding the promise of the blood covenant and true rest.

And I want to begin with what Jesus says last…his very familiar promise to us:

**Come to me all who are:**

- weary
- and
- burdened

- *and I will give you Rest for your souls!*

Could there be any more beautiful words than those in the Bible?

When you hear that promise don’t you want to just relax in a playpen!
“Give me your burdens and I will give you true rest.”

But what is true rest according to Matthew 11?

By saying “I will give you rest”

Jesus is not just talking about having breakfast in bed on a Saturday morning. True rest in the Greek means to:

- Be in a state of deepest Calm
• A state of deepest contentment
• A state of blessing knowing that Jesus knows your deepest secrets and loves you..
• The kind of rest where life could be falling down around you and you're okay, because your heart is at rest in Christ.

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That’s the end game, that’s the end of the passage..

**BUT.....**

How do we get that rest?

This is where the blood covenant comes in and this is where it gets dicey.

Stay with me as we go to the start of our passage in Chapter 11.

It’s almost like there are 2 men named Jesus in Matthew 11!

  o One grumpy
  o and one Kind!

  o Jesus ends sweetly in verse 28 with our passage on rest,
  o but begins angry with Judgement in verse 20.

Verse 20, Jesus is:

• Rejecting, denouncing even cursing the cities he had done miracles in!

Chapter 11 Verse 21...Jesus says:

• Woe to you Korazin
• Woe to you Bethsaida..
• Woe to you Capernaum...

Jesus is rejecting the people of these cites....

Now we might say..

Jesus didn’t reject them, after all he’s too loving to judge and reject anyone---
At least that’s what I read on a church banner down the street.

Matthew 11 tells us the banner down the street is wrong... Jesus did judge people, Jesus did reject people...

Why?

Because the people of

- Korazin
- Bethsaida.
- And Capernaum...

Saw Jesus firsthand, sat under his preaching and teaching... and yet stubbornly refused to repent of their sins and believe Jesus!

Jesus judges them more harshly because they had heard the Gospel and their lives were no different.

He rejects them because of their sin of...

- INDIFFERENCE...
- THEIR LUKEWARM FAITH.

I think of the University professor who notices one of his students is about to fall asleep, so he asks him:

“What is the greatest problem in our society?

Ignorance or Apathy?”

The student replies...

I don’t know and I don’t care...

Spiritual apathy!

Jesus had taught them about the blood covenant,

The fact that he was going to the cross to die for their sin,

and to be forgiven they needed to repent.

+++++++ He taught through the Blood Covenant that: Those who:
DO repent.

For those who:

Do face their own sin within and give it to Jesus.

They would find TRUE REST!
You see my friends…

The Bible insists that God is a God of both:

- Wrath...
- and
- Love...

One without the other is meaningless!

God is a God of both:

- Judgement
- And
- Rest.

There has to be wrath and Judgement to get our sin out of the way to produce rest!

Rest is produced by what Jesus did on the cross…

Jesus crucifying our sin and shame that we finally would have rest in our souls!

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But naturally we don’t like this because we have to submit ourselves to be judged by one higher than ourselves!

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Let me give you an illustration.

Say you’re driving down Broad Street, and when you get to Meeting Street, what do you have to do?

You have to submit to being judged by the traffic lights don’t you!

You could say to the traffic light,

“What right do you have to tell me
IF

I can go or not?”

And therefore you could breeze through the red light, indifferent to the light…

but risk the wrath of the traffic and even kill someone or be killed.

But if you welcome that judgement, and obey the light, that’s true freedom isn’t it?
You can drive through in peace with a heart of rest!

You see…Jesus doesn’t judge to condemn,

Jesus judges to restore.

His wrath is not for condemnation but repentance and rest-oration.

Note the word rest in rest-oration.

Remember the words of John 3?

*Jesus was sent into the world, not to condemn the world but so that all who believe in him might be saved!*

I know this is hard to get our minds around, because we are so brainwashed that God is only love….but for it be true love there has to be judgement on our sin!

Another example of this in real life..

- Consider the loved one in your life that is killing themselves through addiction.
- They want to sail through every red light and do life with no judgement!
- And certainly we could be co-dependents and say..
- “Uncle Bob I love you, and always will and then do nothing….
- and they drink themselves to death.”
- That response is anything but loving.

- **Judgement, wrath that leads to repentance**
- **Produces deepest forgiveness**
• **and therefore deepest rest!**

Tim Keller summed it up beautifully when he said..

“When we meet Jesus, Jesus makes that sense of judgement conscious.”

Through the Holy Spirit Jesus enables us to identify our sin within, so we can give it to him, be forgiven and given true rest!

Like Uncle Bob submitting himself to the judgement of God and being led to repentance finding rescue and true rest.

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Here’s what’s so amazing!

When Jesus said:

“Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest……”

These were second chance words aimed for the rejected people of:

• Korazin
• Bethsaida..
• And Capernaum...

It’s never too late Korazin!

Never too late Bethsaida,

Never too late Capernaum!

Yes….

• You’re tired because:
  
  o you have not repented of that sin

  o In fact you're still living in a way that you know isn't right...and it’s exhausting you

• You’re tired because:

  o You believe you're in control of life..

• You're tired because:
you’re striving

And believe it’s all up to you

• You’re tired because:
  
  o By not forgiving that person you believe YOU are their judge
  
  o And you think by not forgiving you’re taking the high moral ground

• You’re tired because:
  
  o This root of sin and unforgiveness is secretly exhausting you

But come to me, take my yoke upon you, in other words, allow yourself to be judged by me, become conscious of your sin, repent and you will be given rest.

My friends…

are you: REST-----LESS?

• Not sleeping?
• Edgy?
• Moody?
• Angry?

There is one solution..

Moving from

rest-less-ness

to

rest…

Requires:

repentance.

• Jesus
  
  o Where in my life do I need to come clean?

• Jesus
What do I need to repent of?

- Jesus
  - What bitterness and regret do I need to give you?

- Jesus
  - Who do I need to forgive?

- Jesus
  - What part of my life have I not given to you?

- Jesus, I believe in you

- Judge me, and through your blood covenant you made with us on your cross...forgive me...

- Restore me, give me true REST.

My friends, can I be vulnerable with you?

Something has happened in my life that has me absolutely convinced that what Jesus said is true.

And not to share it seems in-authentic.

49 years ago, my parents divorced...and my mother hated my father for it...

That hatred in her heart continued daily for 49 years.

That inability to forgive gave her a rest-less-ness, and an inability to be truly loved...why?

That hatred took up so much room in her heart, there wasn’t much real estate left for anything else!

For a good 35 years I:

  - Prayed
  - begged
    - and urged my mother to forgive...

    - and each time was met with a violent no.

She truly believed that forgiving him would make what he did okay…
And of course forgiveness is not that, forgiveness is simply saying Jesus you’re the judge not me, through forgiveness I am simply releasing this person’s control over me.

49 years…a no,

49 years total rest-less-ness…

Until…

UNTIL

last Sunday night.

My mother was supposed to go in for surgery but the surgery had to be cancelled because she got Pneumonia.

On Sunday night, joined by my sister I was in her Boston Hospital room…

And God just forced these words out of my mouth…

“Mom, before your rescheduled and upcoming surgery, you do know there is one thing you must do for true healing right?”

I was shocked that those words came out of my mouth because in some ways I had given up on her ever forgiving…But I was more than shocked when she without hesitation said…

“I know, I need to forgive.

I need to make peace with God…”

And half in tears, we went through a prayer of forgiveness where she uttered…

“I Forgive Alfred.”

As she said those words, this wave of sweet beautiful rest came over her.

Her 84 year old wrinkles just seemed to fade away…

Out came:

- a deepest sweetest smile
- refreshment
- peace
Deepest rest.

Rest from the cross that wiped away 49 years of rest-less-ness….

I felt like Simeon in the Song of Simeon…

“Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised;

For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see;

A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel!”

True rest comes from the Cross..

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There are some in this room who might be:

- bitter at how their life has turned out,
- and cannot forget what someone else has done to them….
- Or dealing with a secret sin…

Don’t you see how rest-less you are?

Today—repent—

Allow yourself to be judged by Jesus…come clean…and you will find deepest deepest rest.

The kind of rest where others in your life say:

- **You seem so refreshed!**
- **I want what you have!**

Deepest Rest….Let us pray.