

Rest for dummies – Matthew 11:25-30

19th September 2010 @ 10:30am

Introduction

Good morning everyone

How's your week been?

Mine's been a really busy one.

It started badly. I had to go to a half study-day on my day-off!

Then, it got worse! Steve's just back from holiday.... full of ideas and with renewed energy and enthusiasm – that's enough to strike fear into the heart of a battle-hardened Churchwarden, never mind a humble curate!

Yes, it's been a really busy week for me

But of course I'm not the only one, am I!

Many of you will have diaries twice full as mine

Many of you will be taking early morning trains to London and won't be back home for over 12 hours

Many of you will have small children that rightly need your attention but sap your energy

And so for many of you, making the choice to come to church this morning was not an easy one

It would have been so easy just to stay in bed a touch longer...

But you didn't – instead you're here!

And I'm really glad you are because this morning I'm going to be talking about rest: rest for dummies.

Just like the "How-to" books of the same name, I'm going to give you the fool's guide on how to escape the rat-race!

It's a very simple structure

Firstly, I'm going to talk about the cause of busyness – why is it that we're so busy?

Then I'm going to talk about the cure for busyness – what is it and more importantly, where can we find it?

Got that? The cause of busyness and then the cure for busyness **Page 977/Matt 11:25-30**

The cause of busyness

Okay, the cause of busyness.

Let's start by looking at how we've got to where we are. How is it that in an age when we've access to more labour-saving devices than ever before, we've no time to do anything?

Perhaps the first area to look at is science and technology. Could this be the cause of our busyness?

There's no doubt at all that the pace of life is considerably faster than it ever used to be. Ever since the steam train started to speed up our journeys across land, in the nineteenth century, things have got faster and faster.

Last week the internet giant, Google, unveiled a new search technology that displays results as soon as users type in queries. The company claim it can shave up to five seconds off a search.

Five seconds a search! Google believe that those five seconds are so significant that they're banking on it to keep them at the top of the internet search-engine league table.

Going faster, and doing things faster, mean that we can do more in the same time. The advantage of this is that our productivity goes up and so we can make more money. And as technology has continued to advance, we've been able to accelerate our ability to do this.

More money? That's good news isn't it? Isn't it?

Two friends met in the street. One looked sad and almost on the verge of tears. The other man said, "Hey my friend, how come you look like the whole world has caved in?"

The sad one said, "Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, an uncle died and left me £50k."

"That's not bad at all...!"

"Hold on, I'm just getting started. Two weeks ago, a cousin I never knew kicked-the-bucket and left me £95k and it's even tax-free."

"Well, that's great! I'd like that."

"Last week, my grandfather passed away. I inherited almost a million."

"So why are so glum?"

"This week – nothing!"

The problem is that for most people more money simply leads to the desire for more money. Just think MP's expenses or the banking crisis
In fact as a human, whatever we have, we tend to want more of, or a bigger version of, or a newer version of, or a different colour of

The truth is we can't blame technology for our busyness. That's like blaming our cars for the amount of fuel they use. Just as it's our decision on how much to use our car, it's our decision on how much to make use of technology.

No one's forcing us to buy new shoes before our old ones wear out

No one's forcing us to buy the latest smart-phone or flat screen TV while our current ones are still perfectly useable

Do we really need to tear out that five year-old kitchen and replace it with a new one?

You see the problem is that there's price to be paid for all this. Instead of being able to enjoy the fruits of their labours, people are becoming ever more loaded down by their insatiable desire for more and to have it faster.

Because if you want more, you have to earn more

And to earn more, you have to work harder

Now I know I'm making huge generalisations and not everything I'm saying applies to everyone, but hopefully you can see the main point that I'm making here.

The fact is that for most people it's our own decisions that are causing our busyness
It's our own choices that are driving us live the way that we do
Whose decision was it to go on that more expensive holiday, or to load up that credit card with non-essential items, or to get a bigger mortgage to pay for that bigger house?

The sad fact is that the root cause of our busyness is us!
Because of the choices we've made, many of us now live life in such a busy, non-stop way that we're permanently standing on the edge.
Because of our overloaded lifestyles, we're on the edge of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual breakdown

The cure for busyness – part 1 (v25-28)

So, if we, humans, are the primary cause, what's the cure and where can we get it?

In the midst of all our struggles and all our turmoil, Jesus says simply: "Come to me"
"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (v28)

In verse 28, Jesus says I've got the answer to what you're looking for. Come to me.

I'll give you rest from those unhelpful desires that drive you to exhaustion
I'll give you rest from your relentless search for self-fulfilment and happiness
I'll give you rest from your dissatisfaction with what you have
I'll give you rest such as you've never enjoyed before

If you're one of those who's completely exhausted by the burdens you're carrying
If right now you're not sure how you're going to get through next week
Jesus says this to you: "I've got what you need. Come to me right now and get it."

But if it's all so easy and obvious you might be thinking, what's stopping people from coming to Jesus? What's the catch?

Well, there's a number of reasons why people resist Jesus' offer but basically it boils down to two core ones:

Firstly, we have the wrong attitude to God

And secondly, we have wrong ideas about Jesus

Let look at these reasons in turn:

Firstly, we have the wrong attitude to God

To help us understand this let's look at Jesus' very surprising prayer in verses 25 & 26: "*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.* ²⁶ *Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.*"

At first sight it seems extraordinary that Jesus is praising God for making things more difficult for us. But if we look further we can see why this is so important.

The problem with being wise and learned, is that we're tempted to think that we're somehow significant in God's eyes, that we've got something worthwhile to offer God. Basically the problem with having a great mind is that we can think we're great!

And it's a short step from thinking we're great, to thinking that we're in some way worthy before God

That we deserve a place in his kingdom through our own efforts and abilities

That we can be saved by doing the right things

Instead Jesus reveals that the only access we have to truth is through faith rather than intelligence. What's needed is a childlike faith and trust, not genius or learning. Rather than being self-sufficient, we need to be humble enough to see our dependence on him.

Now let me be very clear. There's nothing wrong with intelligence as such. Indeed we need our brains to think through all these things

But knowing God is not dependent upon intelligence – it's dependent on grace

It's what God's done for us in Jesus, not what we can do for him

So, firstly, we resist Jesus' offer because we're not prepared to come to him in humility and childlikeness

Secondly, we resist Jesus' offer because we have wrong idea about him

Look at verse 27

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (v27)

This is one of the most astonishing verses in the whole Bible. We need to understand that these words are absolute dynamite. It's simply breathtaking stuff!

Jesus is claiming here to be the centre around which everything has its place and its meaning.

Jesus is saying that he's the heart of all God's revelation to humanity.

He is saying that he fully represents God

He says that only he knows the Father and only the Father knows him

He's not saying that he knows something about God; he's saying that he knows God absolutely

In short, and frankly there's no getting round this, he's claiming that he, Jesus, is God

Now that's astounding enough but he's not finished.

He goes on to claim that he alone can reveal God the Father

In John 14:6, Jesus says this: *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6) And a few verses later he adds: *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."* (John 14:9)

He's saying that if you want to know what God is like, look at me.

He's saying that if you want to get through to God, come to me.

That's the claim.

That's what makes Christianity so widely attractive and at the same time so widely hated.

The sheer exclusivity of this claim drives people in one direction or the other.

It doesn't allow us to occupy the middle ground.

C.S. Lewis was right when he said that there's no way of reconciling Jesus' humility of lifestyle, quality of character and depth of teaching, with the rampant megalomania of his claim to be God, if in fact he is not God!

Jesus invites us to respond to his staggering claim: "Come to me" he says. Not go to someone else. Come to me!

Come! That one word shows us the very heart of God. That's his attitude to us sinners. And the weary and heavily burdened are particularly invited.

If you've got a petrol-engine car, the only thing that you can use to make it run properly is petrol.

It's the same with Jesus. We've all got a Jesus-shaped hole in our lives. So let's not fill it with the junk of worn busyness, let's fill it with him, so that our lives will run properly!

You see, ultimately the search for rest is really the search for God!

So, instead of resisting him why not do as Jesus says. Why not come to him?

The cure for busyness – part 2 (v29-30)

After we've come to Jesus, there's something else we have to do. We have to take on his yoke.

In verse 29 and 30 he says: *"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."* (v29-30)

First of all we need to understand that this yoke that he's talking about is God's will for our lives

When Jesus says "Take my yoke", he's talking about putting on God's will for our lives with Jesus helping alongside us

Jesus' yoke is a learning relationship

It's about learning God's will in the broad sense by reading the Bible

It's about learning God's will in the personal sense by applying it personally in our lives

We're to take Jesus' yoke and learn from his gentleness and humility

Jesus' yoke is also a loving relationship

The core of his teaching is to love God with our whole being and love our neighbour as ourselves

Jesus' teaching isn't about following a different rule book to the world's; it's about living a life of loving devotion to God and to each other. It's all about the relationship

That's why Jesus' yoke is also a refreshing yoke

It's not a burden – it's easy to wear because it's made to measure: it's God's will for our life – no one else's.

We're not being asked to do what someone else has been designed for

We're being asked to do what we've been designed for

Now Jesus' promise in verse 29, that we will find rest for our souls isn't an empty promise.

So, if you're not finding rest in what you're doing right now, if your yoke doesn't seem to fit, maybe it isn't the one God has in mind for you

If you're not designed to be an accountant, then being an accountant will drain you

If you're not designed to be a Home Group leader, then leading one won't energise you, it'll exhaust you

If you're not designed to be a Welcomer for our services, then you won't make a great job of it and you may even get to dread Sundays

But when we're doing what God has designed us for, we find refreshment even while we're doing the work

Even though, as I've said, I've had a really busy week, I haven't been burdened by it. Quite the reverse – I've had a lot of fun! I wouldn't swap what I'm doing now for anything!

Jesus' burden is light.

In comparison with the strains of living in God's world without knowing God

In comparison with trying to satisfy our insatiable desires and our relentless searching for self-fulfilment and happiness

It's no burden at all!

What Jesus asks of us actually lightens the task of living

When he gives us tasks he equips us and strengthens us to be able to do them

Finally Jesus' yoke is to be put on. It's not an option for a disciple of his.

Jesus came to give us the right sort of busyness, not to take all work away from us

And if we don't wear his yoke, we'll soon find ourselves wearing another!

For very good reasons the electrical systems in our houses use fuses to protect our electrical circuits from becoming overloaded. But once the fuse blows, the circuit is useless until it's sorted out.

That's why the enemy loves it when we're overloaded

He loves it when we're too busy to devote any time to God

He loves it when we're too overloaded to find time to pray, or to worship, or to read the Bible

He loves it when we're too busy to spend time with Jesus, and instead become yoked again to the troubles and burdens of this busy world

Conclusion

So let's recap

Whoever you are, and however tough your situation, the secret of rest is simply this: Come to Jesus. Don't resist his call

This offer is for everyone

If you're not yet a Christian, Jesus says this to you: "Come to me and I'll give you peace and rest for your soul. I'll help you make something really valuable from the rest of your life"

If you're are a Christian, but you're struggling to make sense of what's happening to you, Jesus says this to you: "Come to me and take my yoke upon you. I'll show you my father's will for your life. I'll give you rest from your struggles and a renewed sense of purpose."

And if you're a Jesus-yoked Christian who's nearing the end of your life, Jesus says this to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You can look forward to eternal rest with me and all the Christian saints who've made it to heaven before you and are now resting from their labours in paradise"

The real tragedy is not that life is hard, but that so many fail to take advantage of the One who can enable them to overcome – Jesus!

The real tragedy is that so many are adrift in life's turbulent waters not realizing that a safe haven is readily available. They are effectively starving while God's table is overflowing with good things.

So, don't be one of them!

This morning set aside your overload, come to Jesus and take up the gentle yoke of God's will for you and your life

Prayer