

**Sermon:** *Invited to Rest*  
**Text:** *Matthew 11:25 – 30*  
**Date:** *July 6, 2008 AM*  
**Place:** *Jesup First UMC*

Robert Kirkpatrick got a special invitation in the mail. It was from President Bush and Vice-President Cheney, inviting Robert to a special dinner, a fund-raising dinner at \$2500 a plate. What an invitation! And Robert really wanted to go, but there was just one little problem: Robert was in the middle of serving a three year term at Belmont Correctional Institute. So, he wrote back: *“Dear Mr. President, I’d be happy to attend your grand affair, but you’re going to have to pull a few strings to get me there.”* Now, that’s an invitation that’s too good to be true.

I remember sitting there listening to the preacher that night. He was a Church of God Evangelist and he preached at me all night. Oh, there were other people under the tent, but it felt like he was preaching at me, pointing to me, looking at me. And then, he gave the invitation; he said: *“God loves you and wants you to be a part of His family. Won’t you come? Come to Jesus! You’ve tried it your way; you’ve ran from Him long enough. Now it’s time to come to Jesus!”* Wow! What an invitation!

We are a tired and weary people. Nearly 80% of all people in the United States are sleep deprived. And although they tell us we need 8 hours of sleep a night, most Americans get less than 6 ½ hours sleep. We are a tired and weary people. We continue to work long hours and our jobs continue to play a great strain on us, mentally, physically, and relationally. We are a tired and weary people. Our families are more chaotic than ever before. We have financial stress caused by higher gas prices and higher food costs. We have relational stresses caused by not having good quality time with those we love the most. We are tired; we are weary; and we are stressed out.

And so, what we really want to do is just get away. You see, we think if we could just get away from work and responsibility, if we could just get away from the house with its never ending list of things to do, if we could just get away from church, then we will come back rested and revitalized and energized. But the truth is that most of us, even after we come back from our little “get aways” are more stressed out, more tired and weary, than when we went. Isn’t there some place that we can turn to where we can find rest and peace?

In our scripture this morning, Matthew tells us about Jesus' invitation, an invitation too good to be true, an exciting invitation to a new kind of life in Christ. Jesus said: "*Come unto me all of you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of 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.*"

Let me share a few thoughts with you this morning:

**First, Jesus invites everyone.** Verse 28 says: "*Come to me all of you.*" One of the unmistakable truths of the gospel is: Jesus came for everyone. John 3:16 says: "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son.*" Isaiah 55 says: "*Ho, everyone that is thirsty, come to the waters and he that has no money, come, buy and eat; yes come.*" And Revelation 22 says: "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come ... and let those who are thirsty come and whoever will, let them take the water of life freely.*"

And so, in Jesus' ministry, we see Him eating with tax collectors and sinners, inviting them to be His disciples; we see Him hanging out with men and women, the rich and the poor, Pharisees and sinners. In Matthew 22, Jesus tells a story about a great king who sent his servants throughout the kingdom to invite people to a great banquet. But in spite of the king's generosity, the people had better things to do. One went to the field; another went to his business. And so, the king called his servants together and sent them out saying, "*Go to the street corners and invite anyone you find.*"

Everyone is invited! ***But more specifically, Jesus invites the weary and heavy laden.*** "*Come to me all of you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens.*" This is a specific invitation to those in Jesus' day who were physically, emotionally, and financially oppressed. You see, the Roman government had placed a big burden on the people of Israel. Some scholars estimate the tax burden at 50%. Everywhere you looked and everywhere you went, there were Roman Soldiers. It is to these people that Jesus said "*come.*"

But Jesus was also speaking to another group, a group who were spiritually oppressed. If the Romans weren't enough to deal with, then you had to deal with the Sadducees and Pharisees, the religious people, who demanded 100% compliance with their rules and regulations. They were the holy people and instead of using their power and position to expand the Kingdom of God, they used their power and position to place heavy burdens on people and to scare

them away from the Kingdom. It is to these people that Jesus said: "Come." Everybody is invited.

**Now, the second thing I want us to consider this morning is the results of coming to Jesus.** What happens when the weary and heavy laden come?

**Well, first, we find intimacy with God.** Verse 29 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." Jesus is ever inviting us to deeper levels of intimacy with Himself. When two of John the Baptist's disciples asked Jesus: "Where are you staying?" Jesus said: "Come and see." And over and over, Jesus told the disciples, "*I have made known to you everything the Father has revealed to me.*" He said: "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."

Those who come to Jesus find intimacy with God.

**Second, we find rest in God.** Verse 28 says: "Come to me all of you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." And verse 29 says: "You will find rest for your souls." Our culture has forgotten what rest is. In our drive to be the greatest nation in the world, the most productive and hardest working people in the world, we have forgotten our need for rest. But the Jewish people knew the importance of rest. In six days, God created the world and everything that exists and on the seventh day, God rested. And God had established the Sabbath as a day of rest for land, people, and even cattle.

This is the rest that God promises us in Christ. In Him, we find rest from the things that oppress us. In Him, we find rest from the cares of life. And that rest brings a sense of God's presence and power in our lives that we can't experience elsewhere.

Those who come to Jesus find rest in God.

And so, we come today as those who are weary and heavy laden. Some of us come beaten and battered by the cares of life. Some of us come carrying heartaches and heartbreaks. Some of us come carrying burdens of sickness and grief. And we come, hearing Jesus' invitation "Come to me all of you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls."

**Sing ... *Just As I Am Without One Plea***