

Shawnee Presbyterian Church
Sunday, July 5, 2020
Chera Wertz
“Are You Tired?”

Call to Worship

This is the day that God has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it! Welcome to this sacred place where, indeed, all are welcome. It is here, in this safe space, we receive one another just as we are, just as God receives us.

Wherever you are along your life's journey; whatever your name; however you feel-come one and all. Come, and experience the abundance of God's love for you, providing for your every need.

Come, and experience the invitation to give back to our God who has given us life itself. Come, and be empowered by the Good News of Christ so that we can share that abundant love with others.

Come, so that our abundance meets the great needs of our world, and the needs of our sisters and brothers become part of our abundance.

Let us worship God!

Opening Prayer

Mother and Father of us all, as we gather together, surrounded by the loving care of a community of faith, remind us to invite all those who are without safety, support, and acceptance to this sacred space. Challenge us to Include those in need, whether here in our own community or on the other side of the globe, as part of our faith family. Even if we never meet them, may we always invoke their spirits, stories, and names to grace this space. May we remember them all, whether they be recovering from a disaster; fleeing as refugees or asylum seekers; suffering as victims of violence in any form; attempting to avoid the daily grind of unemployment, hunger, homelessness, and poverty in this country; or struggling among the more than 1 billion people who live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.25 a day, all across our world. God, we can't help but acknowledge what a generous God you are, and yet can't understand why so many of your children do not have even their basic needs met.

Guide us, as your sons and daughters, to respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters, wherever they may be. Call upon us, in all of our abundance, to share what we have so that others may receive what they need to live the abundant life Christ offered us all. Dare us to share, and to do so faithfully, joyfully, and with conviction.

O God of all abundance, hear our prayer. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 11:16-19 New International Version (NIV)

16 “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 17 “‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Matthew 11:25-30

25 At that time Jesus said, "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 is what you were pleased to do. 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. 28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The Word of our Lord
Thanks be to God

Are You Tired?

One of my favorite poems has also been Footprints in the Sand. By Mary Stevenson; "One night I dreamed a dream. I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

When the last scene of my life shot before me I looked back at the footprints in the sand. There was only one set of footprints. I realized that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life. This always bothered me and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma.

"Lord, you told me when I decided to follow you; you would walk and talk with me all the way. But I'm aware that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I just don't understand why, when I need you most, you leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you, never, ever, during your trials and testing's. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you." I think the reason that I like this poem so much is because it reminds me of my Nanny. My Nanny was a Christian who had unfailing faith. One day I asked her, how did you get through the difficult times? Without hesitation she said: "When I face challenging times and felt that I could not get through it without God's help, I'd throw up my hands and say God I can't do this on my own I need you to carry me through." From then on whenever I read Footprints in the Sand I always thought of Nanny.

Sometimes we just have to ask for help. If you're like me that can be a very difficult thing to do. These last few months all of us have been through so much, illness, financial difficulties, loss of jobs, figuring out how to work from home, child care, stay at home orders, you name it we've all been put through the ringer in one way or another. I don't know about you, but I'm tired, as a matter of fact I'm exhausted!

"²⁸ come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-29)

Doesn't that sound wonderful? Rest, an easy yoke, a light burden. Sounds almost too good to be true, in today's rapid-fire, high-pressure, no-excuses world. And to be honest, for many of you here this morning, it is too good to be true. Or at least, it feels that way. Because although you are following Christ as best you know how, and perhaps have been following him for many years, his yoke doesn't feel easy, it feels

difficult. At times it feels almost impossible. His burden doesn't feel light; it feels heavy, almost unbearably heavy. And the idea of "rest" seems like a bad joke.

But — we're sure that everyone else is doing fine, that we're the only ones who are not experiencing peace, and joy, and rest, and so there must be something wrong with us. After all, it's a promise! "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." And God keeps his promises, we know that. And so, we're not quite sure what we're doing wrong, but we're embarrassed to admit that in spite of trusting in Christ, we're still feeling weary and burdened, rather than rested. We're embarrassed to admit that Christ's yoke doesn't feel easy to us; that his burden doesn't feel light—lest everyone else realize how unspiritual and how sinful, we must be. So we put on a smile and suffer in silence. Does any of that sound familiar to you?

If so, I have good news. I think I know why you feel that way. Or at least one of the main reasons you feel that way. And I'm going to first, explain it, and then tell you how you can begin to experience this promise; how you can begin to experience the joy, and peace, and rest that is our birthright as followers of Christ, but which too many of us only pretend to experience.

So here it is: Too many people think of Christ's burden as something they add on to the burdens they are already carrying, rather than what it is meant to be, which is something that replaces those burdens. [Let me repeat that] And so the light burden of Christ becomes just one more thing, the straw that breaks the camel's back. It feels terribly heavy, because it's added on to all the other burdens we're already carrying. And that's our fundamental mistake. Christ's burden is intended to be instead of, not on top of. And when we realize that, when we rid ourselves of all the burdens the world wants us to carry, we will find that in fact, Christ's burden is light, and easy, and even joyful, to carry.

So how do we do that? How do we rid ourselves of all the other heavy loads that Christ's light burden is intended to replace? The Bible has a lot to say about shedding our burdens, more than I can address in one sermon. But I can tell you where to start. And that is by resolving to disappoint people. Yes. My hope is that, as a result of this message, you will make it your intention to disappoint people. Including, perhaps, your parents, your family, your friends, your coworkers, and your neighbors, even some of the people sitting around you here this morning. Bear with me for a few minutes....

A customer wrote a letter of complaint to a company he had bought a knife from. He said that as he used his new knife it had gotten dull, and he had expected that it would last a long time. The company responded, "It will. Sharpen it and try it again."

No matter how sharp a knife might be, however, if it isn't re-sharpened it will get dull.

The point of the story is that no matter how young or old in the Lord someone may be, no matter if they are a baby Christian or an elder of a church, no matter if they teach in the children's ministry or adults in a Bible study or home fellowship, or they are serving as a greeter, usher, or in the area of hospitality, if they are not sharpening themselves through time spent in reflection, and examination, along with time spent in prayer, the Bible, and fellowship, they will get dull, burnt out, and what I have seen, quit.

Therefore, we must be constantly renewing, refreshing, and reviving our soul and spirit in the things of God.

One of the most important and commonly neglected areas of our overall health is rest. Rest is essential to good health. And while it won't provide immunity from illness and disease, it will thwart and slow down some of the more serious physical, emotional, and spiritual problems we face.

Even medical science says that those who get regular and adequate rest are more likely not to get sick as compared to those who burn the midnight oil. Maybe we can say that those who burn the candle at both ends aren't as bright as they think.

We live in a 24/7 culture with cellphones and the Internet to help us stay connected and assessable. But even with all our new inventions, timesaving tools, short cuts, and quick fix solutions we always seem to be in a hurry and running out of time. And so, we push ourselves even harder, squeezing every second out of our work, play, and family time.

And yet with all these so-called efficiencies, we seem to have less time than ever before. When it comes to life, however, warp speed has a way warping our souls. The thinner we spread ourselves; we'll soon find that there is nothing left of us at the end of the day.

To counter this overall feeling of tiredness we pop vitamins and no-doze tablets. We take herbal supplements and drink coffee and high-power energy drinks. We do anything and everything to get a boost to see us through the day. Most of us will spend our lives working. And it is a necessity, regardless of whether you are a subsistence farmer in West Africa or a Software Engineer in Nova Scotia, or a stay at home mom, work is work.

And it's not always fun and it's not always rewarding. I remember telling someone once when they were complaining about their job, "That's why they call it work and not play." There was a time, not that long ago in our country and in our culture that work wasn't something that you needed to find fulfilment in, it was what you did to earn a living and it was what you did to take care of your family, it was work.

And there is a lot that has been said about work, Thomas A. Edison said: "There is no substitute for hard work." Or maybe it was Nikola Tesla who said that.

Stephen King wrote, "Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work." And it was Alex Rodriguez who observed: "Enjoy your sweat because hard work doesn't guarantee success, but without it you don't have a chance." Maybe the Corona virus has taught us to slow down and ask for help when needed? God created a day of rest. He created this day so that we could take time to recharge our batteries. Allow us to be carried in our times of need. Jesus offers a rest that no one else can give, that no letter of the law day of rest can give to us. These blessings are offered to all of us, the rest of forgiveness, rest from fears and rest for our souls. Take a few moments to rest recharge and renew your batteries, by giving your burdens to Christ, let Him carry you through the difficult times. Yes, I'm tired, I'm worn but my strength is renewed in Christ who is carrying me through those difficult times. He can do the same thing for you! Amen