

Scripture: Isaiah 40:28-31; Matthew 11:28-30

Sermon Title: "Rest for the Soul"

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Today, I want to talk about rest – something I think we all can appreciate. As I see it, there are three different types of rest in our lives. The first is rest for the body. When our joints ache, when we get overheated from working in the sun, when our feet hurt, we can rest the body by ceasing the physical activity in which we are engaging, sitting down, and putting our feet up. We can rest the body by caring for it – soaking our feet, getting a massage and more. We can take a nap, go to bed early, and sleep in a little bit later the next day – all of this is rest for the body.

The second type of rest is rest for the mind. When we are thinking about so many things, when we are overwhelmed by our thoughts, when our thinking produces anxiety and worry within us, we can find ways of quieting the mind. Breathing deeply, engaging activities like yoga or meditation, or even distracting our minds and channeling our thoughts into something else that brings happiness or contentment. Also, just like with the body, we can take a nap, go to bed early, and sleep in a little bit later the next day – all of this can bring about rest to our minds.

Still it's the third type that I find the most fascinating. It is a rest of which Jesus spoke of in our reading today from the Gospel of Matthew. A rest for the soul. Now, what exactly might that look like? This past week, as I shared in the joys and concerns, Mason and I officially became homeowners. On Wednesday, we signed the closing documents – a stack of papers that still have my head spinning. I left feeling excited and a bit overwhelmed. For right after we closed, we began moving. A quick move that would have us out of the apartment in 3 days so that the new tenant could move in yesterday on June 1<sup>st</sup>. And so, Wednesday afternoon, we took our first car load of stuff to the house, we went and rented a Uhaul and loading it with those bigger items. We got back to the house that night at 9 or so, unloaded that first truck, and spent our first night in our new home. And all throughout that day, I began to form a list – a list of things that

we needed to get sooner rather than later. A gas can so we could mow the lawn. A new mailbox. A ladder. And little things like picture hangers, screws, and an outdoor water bowl for our dog Hero. And then a list of little projects started to form in my mind. All the homeowners hear today warned me about this list! The never-ending projects of a home. All of this really took place within the first 11 hours of being a homeowner.

The next day would then bring much more moving, another Uhaul truck full of stuff and several more carloads. It would bring boxes to be unpacked and set up. So that next morning, I woke up, my body still feeling a bit sore from our first day of heavy lifting and my mind automatically went to those lists again. I went downstairs and brewed a pot of coffee (after all, we had to make sure we had the essentials for the next day and our coffee maker was already set up and ready to go). I stepped outside onto the deck with a cup and sat down looking out over the yard. In the crisp morning air, I found rest for the body as I put my feet up and enjoyed that coffee. I found rest for the mind as I breathed in the fresh air and found tranquility in the moment, thinking not of ladders and projects, but of the beauty in God's creation. In that moment I thanked God for the wonders around me and for this future unfolding. I thought about the coffee cup I was drinking from - a mug my grandmother used to use every morning. And then I thought about the chair I was sitting on - a gift from a friend to help us out as we settled into our new home. Then my mind went to the crew of Mason's family who would be arriving later that day to help with the packing and moving and the hands which would return the following day to give the apartment a good clean before we turned the keys back over. I thought about the many offers to help in this process in multiple ways, many from this congregation, from this church family. I thought about the faithfulness of our God and the blessings of our Christ and all the ways in which these wonders have manifested in this process and throughout my life. I knew in that moment and was reminded again that morning of the tremendous love of God and love of neighbor which surrounded me. That's when I felt rest for the soul.

Yes, in that moment, I was resting the body as I sat that morning. I was resting the mind as I thought of happy things, as I breathed in the beauty of creation. And at first glance, it may be hard to distinguish where rest for the soul fits in or even how it is identified. I knew I found rest for the soul that morning when the thoughts of all those around me and when the thoughts of God just lifted the weight I was feeling. It didn't remove it. For we still had to move everything from the apartment and we still had to unpack. We still had to get those items from Ames TruValue and we will eventually get to those little projects. Nothing in the reality of the world changed. What changed, what brought about rest for the soul, was this reminder that I am never in this alone. It was this sense of being supported by so many. It was the reminder that God is good, all the time. That God is faithful and we will be lifted up as the words from Isaiah remind us. That with Christ, our burdens get lighter. Not because we don't have as much to do. Not because we won't face challenges in this life. But because we do not face them alone. And perhaps, most importantly, we do not face them without hope.

Beloved people of God, when your body needs rest, make time for it. When your mind needs rest, do the same. And through it all, find that rest for the soul, which will see you through all that comes our way. Find times and ways to renew this rest, so that your very being may be reminded of the words from Isaiah: "those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Find the time to rest the soul, so that your very essence may hear the words of Jesus more fully - words that remind us that, in Christ, we will find rest. So be it and may it be so. Amen.