



## **“Irritated and Exhausted?”**

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### **Matthew 11:16-30 (NRSV):**

<sup>16</sup> “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

<sup>17</sup> ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; <sup>19</sup> the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent. <sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. <sup>23</sup> And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.

For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup> But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.”

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus said, “I thank<sup>[b]</sup> you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

## **Sermon:**

People are on edge. They are tense in the grocery store, they are tense on the streets. There are the mask wearers, that is most of us. And then, there are the non-mask wearers...that is some, few of us.

I found myself almost stalking a young man yesterday, who belligerently told the grocery store worker, "No, no mask". He stomped into the store in front of me and I followed behind, wanting to get up the courage to confront him, snarkily ask him, "so, you don't stop at red lights either?"

I didn't.

But we all walked around that young man, and I could feel the tension from the other folks in the store.

We are irritated. Some of us are exhausted.

Some of us seem discontented with everything and everyone. They are suspicious and cranky. Like the children arguing over their game, in this text.

"Let's play party...no. Let's play funeral...no." "Let's sing...no. Let's be quiet...no!"

What's going on?

I mean, I have heard the explanations...that people refuse to wear masks, "because this killing virus is a conspiracy and a hoax". "It's infringing on individual freedom". "If the president won't wear one, neither will they."

But this is no children's game. This is a matter of who gets sick, and who gets debilitated, and who dies, and who does not.

There are some out there who think they are so wise, so clever, so smart. Immune. Above it all.

I fear not.

And the rest of us get irritated at them. Sometimes, it feels as if they are just itching for a fight!

It is exhausting to hold in the irritation, and the anxiety, the inconvenience, and yes, the fear; it's exhausting to hold in the urge to shout, "you are being a selfish pig" at somebody.

People of color, who have been fighting the anxiety and the fear, who have been living with the pent up tension and the urge to shout for hundreds of years...**this exhaustion, they warn, is a tool of oppression.**

You get too tired to fight any more. You are too tired to put up your guard one more day. So you don't, and you survive in a smaller world. You can end up hopeless and defeated. You just "try to get by" one more day. Try to stay alive, one more day.

If this sounds like our nation, it is true, for many of our people. For people of color. For Indigenous tribes. For the poor and the immigrant everywhere, in Appalachia or in Amarillo. For those at the underpasses in Spokane.

It was also the world of Jesus' people. They knew the irritant of constant indignity, they knew frustration, exhaustion and helplessness. They were infants, nobodies in the world. And their oppression and their exhaustion were used by Roman imperial might to continue the "Pax Romana"...their "Roman peace".

Peace through brutality, by having a knee on the neck of countless peoples. The world's largest army, garrisoned in every conquered land, to secure imperial interests.

Jesus does not despair in this brutal world.

Instead he invites rest, and a light burden for the weary, weary people of the world.

He understands, that exhaustion is the tool of the oppressors. Hopelessness and despair seep in when there is no sleeping, no eating, no restoring of one's soul.

So, he urges the weary and the irritated to come to him, know the freedom and the power of rest, of restoration, of hope that comes in the morning after a night of sleep, or time spent in the presence of beauty, of a moment filled with smiles and laughter.

Is he inviting them to a heavenly rest? Is he asking the beaten down and oppressed to bear with this now, and it will all be right "in the sweet bye and bye"?

I don't think so, I think it is a rest right now, right here...rest that restores energy, and the strength to persevere, to live with dignity, and hope, and work for them!

- This is why every rebellion needs people to feed them good food (Jesus does this, too!).

- This is why we need songs and stories and parties, to restore our spirit. (Jesus does this a lot)
- This is why we need art! What joy and courage and dreams we can rediscover in art! There are pictures and paintings that just stir up my soul, that make it sing, make it shout!
- This is why we need grannies and grampa's who will say, "come rest a while, come rest yourself a while." They pat a spot beside them..."come have a little sit" and allow us to stop.

This sort of rest empowers the knowledge of one's own dignity and value in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of other human beings.

We need such rest right here, right now. We follow Jesus. We want to help, be Kingdom of God people...eyes on justice, hearts open to repentance, arms open to love...and the work is vast and exhausting.

So we need to rest, too.

Rest and be restored. Recognize that your burden is shared with so many, and since it is shared with so many others, it is not so heavy after all.

When the thought comes, "I can't do this anymore", realize you don't have to. You can rest. You are not alone.

Recognize, in the days of pandemic and against the flood of cruelty and wickedness in the world...God trusts in you, loves you, and in Jesus, knows and shares your burdens and your broken heart.

Rest into the arms of God, lean against that loving breast. Rest. And you will feel your spirit

Rise!

Rise!

Rise!

And you will have the strength to rise with it! Yes, you will. Rising to a new day, of hope and new work.

Which is probably why my very favorite hymn is # 89 in our hymnbook: "Awake, awake, to love and work...the lark is in the sky, the fields are wet with diamond dew, the world's awake to cry, their praises to the Fount of Life; Christ Jesus passes by."