

**“Learn from me and you will find rest for your soul.”** We were no longer just spectators, watching Jesus’s mission and ministry. We were now practicing it alongside him and with him. What he was doing, we were doing. We were preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the unclean, and casting out evil spirits. While we were doing this, some disciples of John the Baptist came up to Jesus with a message from John in prison, **“Are you the one or should we expect someone else?!”** Clearly John the Baptist was starting to have some doubts. There he was sitting in prison and yet the Messiah, the Christ, the great liberator had supposedly arrived. John was probably thinking, **“If the Kingdom has arrived, why am I sitting in prison?!”** John was anxious in prison, he wasn’t at **rest**. Jesus told the messengers, **“Tell him what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, the unclean are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them. Blessed is the one who is not scandalized by me!”** The signs of the Kingdom that the prophets had foretold were definitely present. But the lack of “success” with the crowds and the authorities wasn’t what we had expected. As we lived the Kingdom among the people, we ran into more **opposition** than we did welcome. Why weren’t people celebrating the arrival of the Kingdom? It was here to set the people free, why were they **resisting** it?

Jesus then spoke to us about John the Baptist. He told us that John was the greatest prophet to have ever arisen. And we **knew** how all the prophets had been treated throughout history. They were **always** hated and rejected—no one wanted to listen to their difficult messages. And now the Kingdom of Heaven had come and it was **not** any different. People were responding to the Kingdom with **violence**—resisting it, fighting it, and rejecting it. This is why John sat in prison, this is why the authorities were saying Jesus’s work was from Satan, this is why we were having so little seeming “success” with our mission and ministry. Jesus said the crowds were like little children, only wanting the Kingdom on their **own** terms and in their **own** way. They **whined** and **fought** when it wasn’t the way they **wanted**. They were never happy, never at **rest**. Jesus then warned about the cities we had been visiting and doing work in. He said these cities would face the harshest judgment because they were refusing to **repent** in the face of the Kingdom of Heaven. He said Sodom and Gomorrah, who were wiped off the face of the earth, would have it easier on judgment day than these cities who were rejecting our work and message.

All those who thought they had the **answers** in life were the ones rejecting the Kingdom. The “wise” and “intelligent” of the world were actually blind, deaf, and hard-hearted because of their arrogance. Only the powerless, helpless, and humble were open to our work and message. So Jesus called out, **“Come to me all of you who are tired and burdened and I will give you rest...Learn from me and you will find rest for your soul.”** Jesus was urging those who were **broken** by life to come to him. With him they would find true **rest**, true peace, true freedom, true life. Jesus’s yoke, his burden, his Way, his teachings were much better than those of the cities, the crowds, and the political leaders. But the problem was people loved their **familiar comfort zones** and they thought they **knew** what was best. The yokes and burdens of the world were oppressive and toxic, yet the people wouldn’t leave these abusive and anxiety-filled environments behind because they were used to them and were addicted to them.

The world claimed to offer the people **rest** through Sabbath laws, through the temple, through their political leaders, but all this just led to more burdens of **stress, worry, and anxiety**. On one Sabbath day we were walking through some wheat fields. We hadn’t eaten in quite a while and were hungry. Jesus told us to go ahead and pick the heads of wheat and eat all we needed. The authorities saw us doing this and they were **furious**. We were not supposed to be doing harvest **work** on the Sabbath. But Jesus told them about how King David had entered the temple when he was hungry and had eaten the sacred bread that only the priests could eat. And every Sabbath the priests work in the temple and they are still innocent. Jesus said, **“One greater than the temple is here.”** He told them they were failing to listen to the prophets who said, **“I want mercy, not a sacrificial victim.”** Jesus said, **“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”** Jesus’s Way, the Way of the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than the Sabbath laws, greater than the temple building and its sacrificial system. Those things were just **prisons** compared to Jesus’s Way—they couldn’t offer true **rest**.

Jesus was fired up. We headed directly to the synagogue. A man was there with a withered hand. Jesus asked the whole assembly, **“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?!”** No one answered him. Then Jesus said, **“Which of you would not pull your sheep out of a hole on the Sabbath? If you do that, then should you be willing to help a person! It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”** True Sabbath, true **rest** was found in doing good, in being good to those around us, all the time. Jesus then said to the man with the withered hand, **“Stretch out your hand.”** The man listened and obeyed and immediately he was healed. Jesus had just done **work** on the Sabbath. This was the final straw. People had been resisting and rejecting the Kingdom for months, but this drove the authorities over the edge. They lost their minds. They thought Jesus was an agent of Satan. Jesus was threatening all of their familiar comfort zones. They wanted Jesus **dead**. They were not going to tolerate him anymore. So they immediately began plotting how to kill him. Jesus saw their hatred and he walked away, at peace, at **rest**.

**“Learn from me and you will find rest for your soul.”** Do you want **rest**? Do you want peace? Are you tired? Are you exhausted? Do you feel burned out, spread too thin? Do you feel crushed under the weight of life? Do you want to have your burdens and stresses lifted and carried away? You will only find true **rest** and peace when you go to Christ and **learn** his Way of living. Only Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven can lift the weight of the world off your back. The world of Civilization does not want the **true rest** of Christ, it hates it and rejects it. It thinks to find rest you need to go out and fight for what you want—and drown your pains under food, drink, and pills. Civilization thinks busyness, stress, anxiety, and indulgence are the only way to finally achieve rest. But all of the world’s solutions for finding rest, comfort, and peace will **fail** you. They will just further burden you and crush your soul under more weight of stress, anxiety, worry, and fear.

True rest starts **within**. True rest requires us to stop and unlearn our patterns of stress, anxiety, and indulgence and learn Christ’s Way of faith, hope, and love. Only when your heart is in the right place and focused on the right thing can you find true rest. No amount of **external** changes to your circumstances can give you rest. You cannot just drown yourself in numbing pleasures and find rest. Your life flows out of your heart and soul. If your heart and soul are not at **rest within**, you will never find rest no matter what is going on around you. If you are agitated in your heart, then your whole life will be agitated. The only way to change your heart, to change your soul, is to change your focus—to leave your current coping mechanisms behind and fill your life with learning from Jesus. His Word will penetrate the depths of your heart and soul and transform you from the inside out. He will make the tree of your heart good again so it can produce the good fruit of **rest** and peace. He will transform your soul so that you can finally find rest. **“Learn from me and you will find rest for your soul.” Amen.**