

# Sermon

Jul 9, 2017 | The 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 | Preacher: Thomas Prochaska

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To all I am honored that Peter and Dan have asked me to preach. I have been worshipping at 9:15 with our family since early March after completing a call as an interim pastor in Oak Lawn.

After hearing our Gospel reading it's fair to ask, *"What's going on?"* The string of weeks where Jesus teaches his disciples about the joys and challenges of mission have ended. The designated Gospel reading includes two slices of Matthew 11. The first slice is a parable about children who can't agree on the games they play. The parable depicts a generation that can't come to grips with either John the Baptist or Jesus. When John came with his message of austere repentance, they complained. When Jesus came welcoming everyone with open arms—proclaiming God's abundant favor—they dismissed him."

An important question for us is this: *"What's going on in your life?"* If you listen again to Jesus' words I think you will recognize a present day challenge. Jesus said: *"But to what can I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another. 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'" Quiet possibly, there are two groups of stubborn kids. Some see what's happening and feel like dancing while others look around and feel like crying. Each wants the other to join them (to observe the world as they do) but neither does. Each group is stuck. Instead of getting up and doing something, (anything positive) about this prevailing situation, everyone stays planted right where they are and simply complains. The tragedy is, nobody talks and even worse, nobody listens.*

There is a way to get unstuck. There is a way to keep moving forward. The good news from God comes forth yet again. The good news is that Jesus doesn't stay stuck in his frustration. He picks up his flute and plays God's tune of love and acceptance for everyone to hear, *"Come to me, all of you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."* These words are iconic. At certain times we can't hear them enough. At other times the invitation to lay down heavy

burdens and rest is not easy to hear or accept. There is so much to do, so many expectations to be met. Our lives are complicated and busy. We have countless obligations. Most of us, I'm guessing, are protectionists. We don't want to disappoint anyone. We can't disappoint certain folks or our careers and our families' welfare will be at stake. We certainly don't want to disappoint ourselves. Getting life right makes us happy; getting it wrong weighs us down. We constantly feel the burden.

We come together acknowledging our needs and trusting that Jesus will respond. We worship and pray, giving thanks for what is good and right and bring before God our hurt, our pain, our loneliness and disappointments. We trust that God knows our struggles and has entered into our lives in Christ Jesus. We believe that God has promised to heal us and make us whole. It doesn't usually happen overnight and as we journey in faith we have hope that we are becoming the servants God has called us to be.

In our reading from Romans, Paul cries out *"Who will rescue me from this body of death?"* Then Paul answers his own question, *"Thanks be to God through Christ our Lord!"* In his cross, death and resurrection Jesus has rescued us from the body of death. *"Come to me,"* Jesus says, I will rescue you from the body of death.

*"Come to me"* is also an invitation to come to the table and eat and drink a meal where Jesus is the host and we are the guests. Come not to be called on the carpet for disappointing others and not measuring up to their expectations. Come, not for a tongue lashing because you didn't listen to others, understand them, and respond as they had hoped you would. Come as you are. Receive what Christ offers you in the tangible presence of his body and blood—the forgiveness of your sins, the strengthening of your faith, the power of the Spirit that will lead you as a child of God's in and through the Church into world with its many challenges and opportunities. Your faith in Christ may even lead you to reach out to others who disagree with you about how our world seems to be at the

moment. You may take the opportunity not to win an argument but to bring needed healing and wholeness to our world.

Come, not because you must add one more thing to your life but come because you get to be involved (joining others) in all that God is doing—deeds of healing power—not of conquest. The blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, the lepers cleaned, the deaf hearing, the dead raised, and the poor receiving good news.

Jesus' invitation is clear: If you are content and satisfied you may find little value in Jesus' invitation. You may indeed remain stuck. But if you are weary, you will find rest, if you are accused—whether by others or by yourself—you will find forgiveness, if you feel abandoned, you will find fellowship, if you feel disappointed, you will find relief, if you feel hurt, you will find healing and if you feel misunderstood, you will be known, and loved and accepted for who you are.

Those are mighty big promises. Trust those promises. Listen as Jesus picks up his flute and plays again the sweet music of God's love grounded in the good news of Jesus Christ. Listen, and dance, you won't be sorry. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Source:

Sunday's and Seasons: Preaching (Year A, 2017) p. 201-202  
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Dear Partners, David Lose  
Pentecost 4 A, June 30, 2014