

Theme: In contrast to the pressures of life, false gods, destructive sins, and crushing legalism that create unrest, Jesus offers Himself as the true rest—calling us to learn from Him and experience the peace that comes from His presence.

I. Intro - Augustine's Confessions

- A. One of the most important books ever written
- B. The story/prayer of Augustine's long journey to God
- C. A trek that led through theft, illicit sex, philosophies, and religions - all in vain.
- D. The famous quote

You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee. Augustine, Confessions, 1.1.1.

- E. What is 'rest' and where is it found?

II. Understanding True Rest

- A. Is true rest physical?

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

1. Labor, heavy laden - is physical rest in view?
2. God's law stipulated physical rest
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. Exodus 20:8-10
 - a. One of the Ten Commandments!
 - b. This is actually part of creation order (Genesis 2:1-4)
 - c. This is why even the animals had to physically rest

- d. In fact, even the land had to rest!
3. This is a deep principle woven into all creation, and we ignore it at our own peril!
4. I have taught on this many times - Sabbath & Rest
5. This is a huge need in America today!

- B. The rest in view here is more than physical

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls**. Matthew 11:29

1. Jesus tells us this is more than physical rest - souls
2. 'Soul' can mean the immaterial part of humans
3. But it is also used of 'life' or the whole person
4. Clearly, more than physical rest is in view.
5. Jesus is speaking about the rest that comes when a person is at peace, experiencing the rightness of the way things are meant to be, the way God has made them.
6. This was the rest Augustine spent years seeking in vain - the rest of truly knowing who he was, why he was created, and experiencing the peace that comes from this.

III. Sources of Unrest

- A. Life in this fallen, broken world creates unrest!

1. This began with the Fall & curse - life can be hard!
2. Ecclesiastes speaks about this a lot!
3. When life is heavy and hard, Jesus calls you to come and receive rest! (Come to the Table later!)

B. Idols and false gods create unrest

My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:13

1. Jeremiah is speaking against idolatry in Jeremiah 2
2. He says there are two problems in play:
 - a. The people have forsaken God, the fountain of living water (that does not give out)
 - b. They dug cisterns (seeking idols) that can't even hold water at all!
3. When we seek false gods, they always promise to quench our thirst, but they can not produce or even hold water!
4. False gods promise to give us rest, but they actually lead to endless restlessness, always seeking but never actually finding that for which we long!
5. Many try this through other religions, or by making other people, activities, their careers, etc. into a god - and this can never bring rest and peace.

C. Sin produces restlessness!

But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. ²¹ There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Isa 57:20-21

1. Wickedness (sin) can not lead to rest and peace.
2. In fact, sin and wickedness produce the opposite of rest and peace - a ceaseless churning and tossing like a stormy sea.
3. Addicts experience this - it takes more and more to get less and less of the effect, and the promised end never comes.

4. But our culture has bored down deeper and now tells me that my sinful desires are not wrong - they are my identity!
5. They promise that if I just drill down in my sin and embrace my identity, I will find rest - but this does not work as is sadly apparent all around us.

D. Legalistic religion prevents true rest!

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take **my yoke** upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For **my yoke** is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

1. Jesus is not offering no yoke, but a different yoke
2. In response to idolatry & wickedness, the Pharisees offered what they called the yoke of the law
"He that takes upon himself **the yoke of the Law**, from him shall be taken away the yoke of the kingdom [troubles from those in power] and the yoke of worldly care; but he that throws off **the yoke of the Law**, upon him shall be laid the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly care" (m. 'Abot 3:5)
3. The New Testament speaks of this yoke negatively
Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? Acts 15:10
For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1
 - a. Both of these verses are talking about the "yoke of the law" as taught by ancient Judaism.
 - b. The problem is not the law, but the way they approached the Law and how they tried to use it!

- c. The Law is useful to distinguish good from evil and to reveal to us our sin, but it can never empower us to actually find rest through freedom from sin!
 - d. The Pharisees misinterpreted the intent of God's Law, added more and more laws on top of it, and condemned anyone who did not carry the burden!
 - e. The next stories in Matthew 12 involve Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for their wrong understanding of the Sabbath and all of the laws they added on top of the Sabbath to make sure no one broke it!
4. Jesus called this legalistic "yoke" a heavy burden. They tie up **heavy burdens**, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. Matthew 23:4
- a. "Heavy burdens" is the same root word as "heavy laden" in Matthew 11:28
 - b. Jesus says the Pharisees' approach not only does not free the people from the weight of sin, it also adds a further burden on them!
 - c. Again, the problem is not the law, but the legalistic spirit in which it was applied, and also the additions to the law that were a burden, not a relief.
 - d. This led them even to shut the offer of grace to the "unclean" - demoniacs, lepers, and tax collectors like Matthew!
 - e. But the Gospels are full of accounts of Jesus extending grace and restoring these very people!
 - f. This is still a huge problem today as some Christians follow the Pharisaical approach, being quick to condemn and demanding that people "clean themselves" by the Law before offering fellowship and grace.

IV. Jesus the True Rest

- A. Jesus offers rest through a relationship with Him
- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28
1. Jesus says true rest is found in coming to Him.
 2. He is not the pointer to rest - He is the True Rest!
 3. This saying comes from two Old Testament texts
 - a. Rest is found in the way of the Lord

Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and **ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.** But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' Jeremiah 6:16

 1. False prophets and teachers deceived people in Jeremiah's day, and God offered rest for the souls of those who would walk in the ancient paths instead.
 2. Jesus is claiming to be the ancient path, to be the Way of Rest.
 - b. Rest is found in the Presence of Yahweh

And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14

 1. Yahweh told Moses His Presence is Rest
 2. Jesus now says that it is His Presence that gives rest - for He is One with the Father and the Spirit!
 4. This is a claim to be God, the only source of rest!
 5. Rest is not found in a philosophy, life principles, or religion, but in a vital, personal relationship with Jesus
- B. Rest comes from the yoke of Jesus (Matthew 11:29-30)
- Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

1. The yoke in view here helps to distribute and carry weight (photo)
2. Jesus offers a yoke to those who learn and follow His teachings
3. The word for learn is the root of “disciple,” and disciples are those who are learning the teachings of Jesus!

Go therefore and make **disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

- a. Discipleship is accomplished through baptism and teaching the commands of Jesus.
- b. This is how Matthew finishes his Gospel!
4. To find and live in rest in Jesus, we must unlearn all we have been taught by the false gods, sin, and legalism of this age and receive the truth from Jesus!
5. We can never experience true rest if we walk contrary to the truth or give ourselves to false gods, sin, or legalism.
6. I will talk more about the importance of Jesus as the Teacher in Matthew’s Gospel in After Hours.

V. Applying the Word

A. Looking to Jesus the True Rest

1. We live in a restless age, so rest seems elusive
2. If you are looking to other things and places for rest, look to Jesus!

3. The first step to rest is knowing Jesus!
4. Even as believers, life can be hard, and we can be lured into looking to other things, other people, our reputation, our identity, our possessions, our sinful desires for rest - but these can never give rest!
5. Come to Jesus to find rest for your soul
 - a. Open the Word and receive the yoke of His teaching
 - b. Spend a few minutes in quiet prayer in His Presence
 - c. Gather with the community in His Presence

B. Encountering Jesus At the Table of Rest

1. Jesus invites you to His Table to give you rest
2. Come lay down your burden and receive His rest
3. Come Unto Jesus (lyric video)

Encountering Jesus the True Rest

Matthew 11:28-30
 February 8, 2026
 Communion
 Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Sabbath and rest; idolatry and false gods; sin; legalism; Deity of Christ; Christology

The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

(HAVE EVERYONE STAND FOR READING)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you

will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30