**Text(s): Mark 6:30-31; Hebrews 4:1-6; Matthew 11:28-30**

**Subject: Come On, Let’s Rest a While!**

 In our text we find the disciples who had been going and doing the work that they had been called to do without taking a break which was necessary for their own well-being.

Earlier in Chapter 6, in verses 12-13, it says that had been going out and proclaiming that people should repent, and that they had cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

 Not only that but there was a lot of angst in the atmosphere around them. For instance, John the Baptist had just been beheaded at the hand of King Herod who was trying to impress Herodias’ daughter who requested John’s head on a platter when Herod asked her what he wanted him to do for her.

 Also, the Jewish leaders were anxious and hostile because the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples were doing ministry and as a result, they perceived that they were going to lose their power and their grip over the Israelites.

 Therefore here, in verses 30-31, after the disciples came back to their meeting place, and after they had told the Lord Jesus all they had done and taught, and because of everything else that they had to endure, The Lord Jesus must have perceived that they were weary and was concerned about their well-being. As a result, H said to them, “come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.”

 Now, at first glance, as we consider this text, our first inclination is to conclude that the Lord Jesus just wanted them to just get some rest and relaxation because the text says, for many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. Therefore, certainly the Lord Jesus was concerned about their physical health.

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 However, if we think about this a little more, we might also conclude that The Lord Jesus also wanted His disciples to be mentally, emotionally and psychologically well. We may make deduce this because rest in this context, in the Greek, is defined as the state of becoming or remaining calm.

 And if we think about it like that then that level of rest can only be obtained on a deeper internal level and is realized in our hearts, our minds, and our souls. Therefore, we may also conclude that it is possible to sit still, or even go to sleep but still not receive rest especially if we are not settled deep down inside.

 Surely, we have all gone to sleep and woke up just as tired, or even more tired when we got up the next morning. And I believe this is so because most likely, we are not settled, or we are weary deep down in our souls.

 In the case of the disciples, the Lord Jesus must have perceived their weariness and as a result, He said to them, “Come On and Rest a While.”

 And, as we further exegete this text, we cannot gloss over the fact that He said, come away by yourselves to a desolate place, and rest a while. This is significant because He knew that, in order for them to really receive the type of rest that would restore their minds and souls back to good health, they needed to go to a desolate place.

 Now, in the Greek, a desolate place is defined as a solitary place which means that they needed to be isolated in order to be properly rested, because otherwise, most likely, they would not receive rest at all and would therefore, be in danger of burn-out or worse, mental, emotional or psychological harm.

 So it is with us. If we look at our current situation from a similar lens, we might be able to draw some parallels. For instance, prior to this season of quarantine, we were under an extreme amount of stress because of the toxic, economic, social, cultural, and political environment that we were, and still are, living in.

 Many people I know were sucking wind and were barely making it because of all of the external and internal pressures and demands that were being forced upon them.

In the African-American context, these pressures and stresses have been exacerbated by the resurgence of baseless hatred and racism that has been directed towards us for more than 400 years.

 As a result, prior to this season, many, if not most people were tightly wound and were about to pop like a jack in the box ready to come out its box because of all of the stress and pressure that was, and still is, winding us all the way up.

 Therefore, like the disciples, the Lord Jesus Christ must have perceived that we too were weary and that we too needed to get away from the hustle and bustle of it all and as a result, we too needed to go to a solitary place so that we could rest a while. And perhaps, that’s what God intended for us to get during this time of isolation.

 However, the unfortunate truth is many us ofhave not received rest at all. Instead, for many, our rest has turned into no rest, or worse, has turned into unrest, because of the threat of the virus but even more because of the uncertainty that has come because of the virus.

 Therefore, let’s park here for a minute because according to Psychology Today, uncertainty can cause tremendous anxiety. This is so because the human brain thrives off of certainty.

However, when we are forced to face prolonged uncertainty, the brain begins to work overtime to create all kinds of scenarios in its attempt to locate some semblance of certainty. It is said that the brain will do almost anything for the sake of certainty and will begin to overestimate threats and will underestimate our ability to handle those threats as real or perceived as they may be.

Also, when certainty is questioned, our stress response goes haywire. In other words, without certainty, our stress levels go through the roof because our brains are uncomfortable with not knowing what the future is going to bring.

Psychologists say that waiting for certainty can feel like torture by a million tiny cuts because the brain is wired for certainty and as a result, simply we are miserable when we don’t have it. Therefore, the brain prefers to know the outcome one way or the other, and will create a perceived outcome rather than not have one at all.

It is said that we are calmer anticipating pain than anticipating uncertainty because pain is certain. Perhaps, that’s why we brace ourselves when we perceive that pain is imminent. The brain is just preparing the body for the certainty that is most likely about to happen.

Another good example of that is job security. Scientists have found that that job insecurity takes a greater toll on our mental health than actually losing a job because losing a job is certain.

Therefore, even though you might be sitting at home not having to go into the office, most likely, you won’t find rest if your job security is uncertain.

However, there is some Good News because whether we know it or not, we can still find rest even in the midst of these extremely stressful and uncertain times we are living in.

In order to find and define this type of rest, let’s consult Hebrews 4, for a minute. Here, we find at least two (or more) types of Biblical rest that we can receive to help us in our times of stress and weariness. (READ vv 1-3b, then READ, vv 6-11).

Let’s break this down. Here, the first type of rest we see is a Canaan type of rest which is a “future rest” that was promised to the Israelites when they entered into the Promised Land; a land flowing with milk and honey.

Dwelling in this was supposed to restore them back to a place of rest and contentment that was promised in the Garden of Eden where everything they needed was provided. However, they never really, fully experienced this type of rest because they had sinful and unbelieving hearts.

We know this because Hebrews 3: 12, and 19 tells us so. (READ). Also, that’s what Hebrews 4:5-6 was referring to.

Now, what we glean from this is that we can find hope that this type of rest is still available if we would not do what they did, and if we would do what God is instructing us to do.

I make this claim because verses 6-8 it says, since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter it because of disobedience, again He appoints a certain day saying, Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.

In other words, we should not harden our hearts like the Israelites did, and we should have faith in God, especially now, and when we do, we will find rest for our weary souls. Hebrews 4:3 says, for we who have believed enter that rest. However, Hebrews 3:19 says, so we see that were unable to enter that because of unbelief.

Let me sum it up this way. Faith and obedience in the promises of God gives us a faith based certainty that will give rest to our hearts, our minds and souls because with such, our minds do not have to work overtime to locate a likely outcome.

In other words, the Word of God gives us something to hold onto that we by faith, know is going to work. In fact, the very definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1 in the King James Version says now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Also in the ESV, it says, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

As a result, with faith, we can have a supernatural certainty in God’s promises, and therefore, we can find rest (a calmness in our hearts, minds and souls) even in these times of uncertainty.

However, without faith, our unbelief will cause us to not be able to experience this type of faith. Instead, unbelief will cause our minds to continue to overestimate the threats of this world and the treats of this season that we are now going through. At the same time, without faith, our minds will continue to underestimate our ability to make it through what we are going through.

Perhaps that’s what James 1:5-8 was referring to where it says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything form the Lord, he is a double-minded man, and unstable in all his ways.

Family, I believe that is where too many people are right now. Too many of us are feeling unstable, uncertain, and un-well right now because do not fully believe that God can or will get us out of the situation that we are in.

As a result, even though we are in isolation, we cannot find rest. Instead, many people are living in a state of personal unrest which by definition is a state of inner turmoil.

That’s what James was referring to when he said that we are unstable in all our ways when we do not have faith in God.

Perhaps, that’s also what the Apostle Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians 6:5 when he briefly mentioned that some had some sleepless nights.

So it is with us, too many of us during this time of isolation have not found any rest at all because we have not fully believed that God is moving in our midst. As a result, we too are feeling unstable and have endured many sleepless nights.

Therefore, that’s why I stopped by here today to say, Come On, and Let’s Rest a While.

Now, earlier we mentioned that there are at least two types of rest are available. Canaan rest which was available to the Israelites in the Promised Land. But, not many of them experienced this type of rest because they did not believe. Therefore, at best, we might consider this type of rest, a “future rest” because it was a promise that still remains to us now.

However, that future rest had to be transformed into a “present type of rest,” that you and I can partake in.

This present rest is made a available through faith in the life, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. We know this because Hebrews 3:14 says, for we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our “original confidence” firm to the end.

In other words, our faith in Christ is what gives us that present, right now, blessed assurance, that we can find rest in. We know this because Hebrews 4:2-3 says, for good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter into that rest, as He has said.

Let’s make it simple. We know that we can have a present, right now type of rest because the Lord Jesus Christ said so. He said in Matthew 11:28-30:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

In other words, when the Lord Jesus said come to Him, He was not saying that we had to wait for some future time He was saying that we can come to Him and find rest for our weary souls, right now!

That means in this time of uncertainty, we come to Jesus, right Now. Perhaps, that’s what the song write meant when he wrote come to Jesus, Just Now, Come to Jesus Just Now….

Then, he went to say, only trust just now……

After that, he wrote, He is able, and He will save you, just now.

That means, when we come to Jesus, we can come right now, and we will find that we can trust Him, because He is able, and that He will save us, right now!

He will save us from our uncertainties, right now!

He will save us from our frailties, just now

He will save us from our weariness,

He will save us from our heaviness,

He will save us from our fearfulness,

And all we got to do is come to Him, by faith, and He will give us rest for our weary souls.

So, Come On and Let’s Rest a While by coming to Jesus Just now, and we find a present, right now type of rest….Amen!