

Pentecost 5 Year A

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus said to the crowd, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; 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."

At that time Jesus said, "I thank 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; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 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.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Prayer: Lord, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be pleasing to you, and helpful to your people here gathered.

-AMEN

Sermon:

Jesus said,

"Come to me, all you that are weary and
are carrying heavy burdens. I will give you rest."

For some folks, the idea of rest,

Is radical and countercultural.

To many of us it seems Wrong. Self-indulgent. Anti-patriotic.ⁱ

But Jesus said, "Come to me... I will give you rest."

Today, in America, it is hard to find rest.

Some say that our national malaise is the result of
People not working hard enough,
Or not caring enough about our national goals.

This nothing new. *“What goes around, comes around”*.

Jesus said, *“I will give you rest”*, more than 2000 years ago.

My seminary years were a busy and unorthodox time. ⁱⁱ

I am most fortunate to have steady and strong wife.

My classmates, young and old, were

Mennonites and other Anabaptists,
Bible preachers, Catholics, and Lutherans,
Episcopalians, and some energetic young folks
I called, *“passive-aggressive pacifists”*.

We all needed “rest”. We talked a lot about how busy the world was.

The whole world needs “rest”.

We talked about the heavy yokes

of busy-ness and of technology,
which enslave even the hardest working people.

I read about Jacque Ellul, a French philosopher,
And his theology about “busy-ness”
and what he called “technique”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Born in Bordeaux, in 1912^{iv}, as a young man
Jacque was enamored by the social and political movements
Of Karl Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth.

He served in the French Resistance.
After the War, like many folks,
he began to think outside the box.

*If folks don't think out of the box,
How else can they rebuild a world
which people have so radically unraveled?*

Jacque saw that Jesus came to both *judge and to renew* the world.^v
Jacque was right.
Ours is a God of endless renewal and of boundless love.^{vi}

Jacque took a hard look at the dominant
Political theories and theologies of his time.^{vii}

An eyewitness to the hate and radical violence of WWII,
He dismissed liberal theology, and its naïve views
about humanity's innate goodness.

He saw the organized church's as revealing not God's glory,
But instead, humanity's boundless desire
to mold and to bind God,
to serve the church machine's needs.

In Jacque's vision,
Christians had forgotten to honor God's commands
and to serve the needs of God's creation.
People had forgotten to work together,
to serve God, and His Kingdom, and instead,
choose to serve their whims and urges.

Jacque Ellul was both naïve and courageous.

To serve God, I think you almost have to be.

I am no scholar.

Most of Jacque's stuff is way about my pay grade.

But, I do think Jacque got a few things right:

God does call each of us, to worship and to serve,

Both God and Creation,

And that includes all of His people.

Creation is a Holy Reflection of the Creator, we are called to serve.

Red, Brown, Yellow, Black and White, they are precious in his sight.

Jacque saw what Jesus saw:

We must be wary of kneeling before the Powers that Be:^{viii}
Our Rulers, our Dictators, and our Judges,
Our TV stars and our trend setters,
Our Nations, our Materialism, and our Technology.^{ix}

With this I agree.^x

Through Jacques, and through many others,
God has continually warned us of the dangers of technology,
And the risk of relying on our machines and idols.

Now, don't get me wrong. I am no troglodyte.

I'm not very good with Tech,
But I rely on it as much as the next guy.,

Still, I know that Tech lures us away, from God's call
and tells us to feed our insatiable appetites,
and to rely on ourselves, first.

But when we rely on our Technology, first,
Our incessantly buzzing and ringing cell phones,
Our laptops, our awesome weapons
and our medical techniques,

We quickly forget that our first call is to serve God--
and is His people and His creation. ^{xi}

Jacque Ellul sought to answer this question:]

How will they know we are Christians by our love,
When our first allegiance is to our culture of machines?

Jesus said, "Come to me... I will give you rest".

In these crazy virus days, we have been given a new chance.
RV sales are going through the roof!

Many of us are working from home, staring out the window,
Wondering when we can get back to "real life".

But for the first time, in a generation,
we have a chance to learn how to live again.

We have a chance to learn how to live without 50-hour work weeks,
and the incessant jingling of our \$1200 cell phones.

We have a chance to use our technology
to free us from the tyranny of the clock.
to use our technology to liberate us from enslavement
to a micro-managing corporate beast.

*“Come to me, all you that are weary and
Who carry heavy burdens. I will give you rest.”*

God’s gift is Rest. Take that gift.

Find your rest, in serving God and His Kingdom.

Find your rest. Turn away from the clatter and noise,
The endless streams of chatter, and
Facebook and Twitter,
texts, emails, and endless buzzing alerts.

Remember Nancy Reagan: *“Just say No”*.

“Come to me, all you that are weary. I will give you rest.”
Embrace Jesus. Lay down your work and fear.
Take a deep breath.
Rest.

-AMEN

ⁱ We even work hard when we rest, which we used to call “kicking back”.

ⁱⁱ When I was in seminary, I had a family, and a full-fledged career. I was in my 40’s. I stood out amongst my classmates. My family, my law partners, my church and my school, All wanted a piece of me, and I couldn’t argue. They -- and my family most of all -- had a right to feel that way. I always knew that.

ⁱⁱⁱ He is credited by some for coining the phrase, “Think globally, Act Locally”, although presumably he would have coined the phrase in French, his native tongue. Others credit David

Brower, founder of Friends of the Earth, or René Dubos, or Canadian "futurist" Frank Feather. See, FN ii, *supra*, and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_globally,_act_locally.

^{iv} He passed in 1994, at age 82, and is and now, it seems, mostly forgotten.

^v https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Ellul

^{vi} When I was 45 years old, God sent me a dream. We had a conversation. I talked with my wife. And here I am. God is like that. God speaks to any of us who will listen. Sometimes he speaks to those who won't listen. Sometimes God burdens us until we say, "Yes".

^{vii} Late in life, Jacque became critical of political establishments. He judged them not by what they claimed they would do, but by what they actually did. Makes sense to me.

^{viii} Ephesians 6:12, (NIV) "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

^{ix} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Ellul

^x I don't agree with Jacque, in every point. He wandered far, sometimes. Maybe too far. In following the Lord it is easy to stray off course a bit. I certainly have. It is hard to see God's path sometimes, and the Devil is always waiting, to turn our eyes away.

^{xi} See, The Technological Society (1964), in French, "La Technique: L'enjeu du siècle".