

**July 9, 2023 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Zechariah 9:9-12, Psalm 145:8-14**  
**Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

[Working Preacher Sermon Brainwave for this date, with a quote from Matt Skinner. Tricia Hersey's Rest is Resistance, page 4, etc.

Bradley Schmeling in the Christian Century, July 1, 2008: [https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2008-07/yoke-christ?code=8DfmOYI0p06cyhDuSZDn&utm\\_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=b93be0cdaa-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_SCP\\_2023-07-03&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-31c915c0b7-%5BLIST\\_EMAIL\\_ID%5D](https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2008-07/yoke-christ?code=8DfmOYI0p06cyhDuSZDn&utm_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm_campaign=b93be0cdaa-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_SCP_2023-07-03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-31c915c0b7-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D)

Ideas from Ezra Klein NY Times Podcast with Judith Schulevitz, Jan. 1, 2023  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/03/podcasts/ezra-klein-show-transcript-judith-shulevitz.html?searchResultPosition=2>. ]

## Trusting the Rest

**Grace and peace, beloved of Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**To begin, take a moment to breathe, take a deep breath, let it out.**

**I invite you to reflect a bit:**

I'll say these questions a few times, make some notes if you'd like:

First:

- How are you feeling weary?
- What burdens are you bringing today?

And then:

- What is the rest that you seek? That you need?
- How do you find it?

**I began writing this sermon at the end of the Ted Olsen Quartet Courtyard Concert in mid June.**

Some of you remember that evening.

It was so smoky from Canadian wildfires, our Courtyard Concert was shifted to the Sanctuary.

The chairs were pulled chairs up close, a horseshoe wrapping the front.

Whether in the chairs or the pews, there was an intimacy.

It was a warm evening, and we showed up, and the concert was... magical, transporting, saving.

**Now, some of you knit while I preach, the better to listen...**

(It's okay, I love that about this church.)

Truth be told, I savor music with a similar posture.

That night, with the jazz, I wasn't knitting as I listened and swayed and smiled and clapped.

Instead I was reading the Sunday scriptures for the coming month or so—

sometimes it helps to see the arc laid out before us.

I was sitting toward the back, scripture in hand, notebook in my lap,

listening to the quartet's jazz, and listening for the Spirit's nudge.

**Our minister of worship and music, Bobby, was preparing to go to Vienna**

for a conducting competition—that's where he's at now.

Bobby had oh so kindly asked Pastor Maria and me to look ahead,  
to plan ahead, to consider the scripture and services into July.

Looking ahead suited me well, for I was dreaming about vacation:

12 days of camping with our family – my spouse Jane and our two kids,  
in British Columbia, that far western Canadian province,  
the bulk of the days on the remote and rugged west coast of Vancouver Island,  
savoring the space and land and sea, and time to just be, and to be together.

We returned from Canada on Wednesday and I completed vacation yesterday. It was wonderful!

Planning ahead made sense—thank you, Bobby!

And it gave my heart and brain the space to be away these last weeks.

**Today's gospel passage ends with that tender promise of rest.**

And it *begins* with a confusing tangle that leaves many of us shaking our heads.

That evening at the concert I read through the passage 2 or 3 times and it just wasn't helping.

Matthew's gospel often tethers between judgement and promise, and today that's certainly true.

Who hears and who doesn't.

Who is wicked and who is just.

Who responds, who engages.

You can feel the frustration, the anger rising in Jesus' words:

It's important to note: this is not anti-Jewish anger.

And as Matt Skinner says, this is "not a raging-angry-God" [kind of anger].

"But rather a sick-of-seeing-people-shut-out-from-access-to-a-life-with-God [kind of anger]."

Jesus is frustrated, angered,

by how those with the greatest privilege  
place stumbling blocks and limit the access to God  
of those who are most vulnerable, those with the greatest need.

**I don't think it's a coincidence that Jesus is using the metaphor of the marketplace.**

It's the marketplace of Jesus' time, and still our time, where we get the most tripped up.

Years ago, Pastor Bradley Schmelting wrote:

"Jesus' invitation to come and take on a different kind of yoke is an offer of rest,"  
and then he continues, "as well as a profound judgment on the laws of the marketplace."

Trusting Jesus' rest, taking on his yoke,

means acknowledging the death grip the yoke of capitalism has on us,  
a yoke so well-worn, we barely know we wear it.

It means taking the time to slow down when that can be risky, we might never catch up.

It means opting for humility, for humanity, for vulnerability,

that's a risk, a big economic risk, a social risk (we might lose some status), a personal risk.

**As I listened to the Ted Olson Quartet, I was sitting there in the pew, thinking of you,**

thinking about what we seek in worship and in life...

the rest and the renewal,

the comfort and challenge, the cup of cool water,

the human connection, the divine love, the holy mystery.

And then round about the last set the quartet played, this passage began to click.

Ted was at the bass,

that amazing alto sax player, Sophia, was doing their thing,

the drums and piano were jiving... and it became so much more clear to me.

**Come to me, all you who 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."**

**Dear ones: Rest is fundamentally countercultural.**

Sabbath practice is radical, and made all the more radical when understood economically.

At its best, Sabbath practice is done in community:

a whole community, or better yet, a whole society committing to pause,

to create a work culture that is humane for everyone, not just we who are privileged, but all of us,

a culture that gives each of us the freedom to frame a space for not doing and for simply being.

Rest is fundamentally countercultural.

I believe that is what Jesus was getting at.

Come to me, he says, you who are weary. Experience my rest, my grace.

**At the start of her book Rest Is Resistance,** Tricia Hersey tells the story of her grandmother who rested her eyes daily.

This practice made a young Tricia so very curious. Hersey writes:

“Whenever I would inquire if she was sleeping, [my grandmother’s] response was always the same: ‘Every shut eye ain’t sleep.

I am resting my eyes and listening for what God wants to tell me.”

Then Hersey continues, “While all the world around her was attempting to crush her Spirit, [my grandmother] rested and resisted the beast of grind culture.”

Rest is resistance. Tricia Hersey describes her book as “a testimony and testament of my refusal to donate my body to a system that still owes a debt to my Ancestors for the theft of their labor and DreamSpace.”

Rest is resistance, she says. Jesus knows this.

Rest is resistance. Play with that idea in your mind for a while.

Try it on in your body.

Resting is a form of resistance.

It’s a way of pushing back against the culture (the grind culture) and the notion that we must be producing, that we’re only valuable when we’re at work.

**I’m thinking about summer, and how fleeting it can feel.**

I’m thinking of a number of you recovering from surgeries, dealing with health, with addiction, with mental health, with traumas and hard stuff.

I’m thinking about so of us on the move, perhaps vacation, but also taking care of the generations, planning out next steps.

I’m thinking of our children going to Amnicon, and our preparations for a trip to Guatemala.

I’m thinking of our world, overheated and battered, facing decisions, pressed to the limits and beyond.

**To us, to all of us, Jesus says,**

“Come to me, all you who 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.”

**Rest is resistance.**

**On vacation Jane and I got into a pattern that I came to love.**

At the end of the evening, our kids in the tent asleep or reading, we'd brush our teeth and wash up.

Then in the dusk, we'd find the path down to the beach.

The waves of the Pacific Ocean never stopped rolling in.

We'd stand in that chilly air, the wind off the water.

I'd breathe, the waves keeping time, and breathe some more...

**...Trusting the rest of our Creator, rest for our souls.**

...Trusting the promise and grace of our Savior.

...Trusting the yoke that is bearable, the burden that is light.

...Trusting the Rest.

May it be so, beloved ones, may it be so. Amen.