

***“I Will Give You Rest”*** (Matthew 11:25-30)

For Your Life in Christ the Third Sunday after Pentecost, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011  
Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa

**Introduction: A day with my dad and Michelangelo:**

- A. My dad had grown up with some barriers between him and the Gospel. One such barrier came out in a conversation in the early-mid ‘80’s: He was a sincere believer but was thrust into war. Problem: how do you reconcile: “Thou shalt not kill” with what you must do in war? As a U.S. Marine in World War II he experienced combat in Okinawa. It was the real deal.
- B. This was a reminder to me that life is very hard, it makes us tired, it wears us out, and sometimes we can feel as if life itself practically pushes us away from God.
- C. My dad and I spoke that day. I explained to him that the word in the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment is the Hebrew word *rasah*. This was not simply *kill*, but properly translated as *murder*. We clarified that the government was established by God and this is taught in Romans 13. He was obeying the God-given authority while defending his country. This was not murder and God did not hold it against him.
- D. Before this conversation, there was another event, much more poignant. On July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1949, my parents had their first baby -- Robert Steven Espinosa -- on a searing hot day, he died on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1949. Incidentally, my dad always said he wanted three sons. After Robert Steven died, Larry Daniel and Robert Rodney were the next sons. It was as if Robert Steven had made a space for me to be the third son. What is further intriguing is that he was born on July 6<sup>th</sup>, I was born on July 8<sup>th</sup>, and he died on July 9<sup>th</sup>. The death of his first child had an incomprehensible impact on my dad. He bore a sense of responsibility and it was that event that drove him to do what he did next: In 1950 he pursued his goal to become a top flight journeyman mechanic. He was naturally gifted for the task and after his

-2-

training in diversified mechanics at National Schools in Los Angeles and diesel engine troubleshooting and fuel injection at Adcox School in Portland, Oregon he came back to Delano and started working at Traynor Equipment Company, a caterpillar and John Deere dealer in January of 1952. After honing his skills, he became a self-employed and much sought-after mechanic in 1959.

- E. But what did he carry in his soul? Fast forward to 2003 when my dad was in his late 70’s. My parents came out to Texas to visit me. When they came there was a special museum tour in Houston on the Vatican. I knew my Roman Catholic parents would enjoy it. I strolled through the museum with my dad and we came up to a miniature reproduction of Michelangelo’s “The Last Judgment” that pre-dominates the Sistine chapel at the Vatican. My dad was mesmerized by the painting. After a little while, I decided to comment on the painting explaining that it was a visual presentation of what is taught in Matthew 25, the great separation at the Last Judgment between the sheep and the goats. My dad stood there amazed when he said, “But I thought that *everyone* went to heaven.” God had opened a wide swath for me to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and without hesitating I did. Later that day back at my house, my dad read from a Christian magazine I had laying out. He walked out of my bedroom and something happened that I had never before experienced: my dad was quoting Scripture! He walked out with exuberance and declared: “Did you know that the Good Book says ***‘Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.’***” (John 15:13) I realized that my dad was connecting the dots: this was how much Jesus Christ loved him!
- F. Since that time for the past several years, I’ve had the best spiritual years with my dad. Whenever I would be out in Bakersfield, I would try to take him to see his brother, my

Uncle Alfred in a rehab/convalescent home. I would sing the hymn *Rock of Ages* to which my dad started saying "Amen!" to and most recently at the hospital, I had a quality talk with my dad. He shared that he had some regrets and I reminded him what Jesus Christ had done with them. We prayed and he said, "Amen!"

- G. He was weary, tired, hurting, worn out...and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus was giving him rest. We read together:

**Matthew 11:28-29:** *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>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."*

**Part I: "REST"**

- A. The word "rest" = take rest, refresh. Note that here in Matthew 11 Jesus says that He will give us this great gift – refreshing rest – for our soul.
- B. Matthew 11:25-30 comes after an account of rejection = not having faith in Christ cuts one off from knowing rest. Instead, we have only the anticipation of judgment and a restless soul.
  - 1. There is nothing worse than rejecting Jesus Christ.
  - 2. What made the rejection of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum so bad was that they were given many signs.
  - 3. Just like people today: the sign of creation, conscience, the Holy Bible, the Holy Church.
- C. In this context, Jesus speaks today's Gospel.

**Part II: What We Need to Know to Have Rest**

- A. Vs. 25: He is not speaking against intelligence, but don't put reason ABOVE faith!
  - 1. Reason is a gift from God. The problem arises when we trust our reason above God!
  - 2. Christ therefore teaches that we should be as "little children" = Latin for this is *infans* or "not speaking".

**Mark 10:15:** *"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*

- 3. God does not call us to be childish, but child-like!
- B. In this condition, we see Christ as our ONLY way to know God!

**Matthew 10:27:** *"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."*

- 1. The only way to know God is through the Son.
- 2. So much for "all roads leading to heaven" There is but one way (John 14:6 and Acts 4:12) not 31 flavors.
- 3. Why should we complain? We accept particulars every, single day. Life is full of requiring exacting aspects. For example, medicine, recipe's, mechanical parts, mathematical formula's, actual people and places.
- 4. And yet when it comes to faith, people want to cry "foul!"

**Part III: Jesus Saves the Best for Last**

- A. Other systems base their motivation on fear.
- B. Jesus does not twist arms.
- C. He tenderly invites. This is what makes the Gospel unique. It is the voice of unconditional love and mercy when we "labor and are heavy laden."
- D. These words describe sorrow, anxiety and the terrors of conscience (of sin and death).
- E. You don't need a religion that says, "Just do more!" Instead:

**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:7:** *"[cast] all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."*

- F. He bore all sin that is the basis for all anxiety.
- G. And in the place of your sin, He gives you His yoke = His burden was the removal of all your sin and burdens! Thus, it becomes very easy and very light = you know it was Christ who bore your sin, curse, guilt, and shame. With this assurance, you REST in Christ!