Daniel Garner Tate Sermon, Sunday, July 5, 2026
St Ambrose Episcopal Church, Foster City, CA
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Zechariah 9:9-12, Psalm 145:8-15, Romans 7:15-25a, Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

In the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says, “come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest. I will give you rest for your souls.”

The Psalmist says 23:1–3 "He makes me lie down in green pastures... He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul."

Jeremiah 6:16 says, “Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls."

Isaiah says 26:3, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you..."

In Philippians 4:6–7 Paul says "...the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

How do we get this rest? Rest doesn’t just happen. We don’t make ourselves rest or sleep, sleep just happens when our bodies are ready. We can create the conditions for a good night’s sleep, but we can’t make ourselves sleep.

For a long time, I had trouble sleeping. My doctor said I had chronic insomnia and prescribed therapy sessions with a sleep doctor. I learned I needed to go to bed and get up at the same time. Not to eat four hours before bedtime. Build up sleep drive during the day. Make sure to do physical activities. Don’t take naps. Make sure to get at least a half hour of sunshine early in the morning to set my Circadian (ser-KAY-dee-un) rhythm. Every day, be social and do something mentally stimulating. Don’t look at television, computer or phone screens an hour or more before bedtime. Don’t use too much caffeine or sugar. No electronics in the bedroom. The bedroom has to be associated with only sleeping. If you wake up in the night and can’t go back to sleep, get up and do something in another room that’s relaxing.

If worry or anxiety keeps us awake, use mindfulness meditation, breathing exercises, or do yoga or stretching during the day. This is the kind of rest Jesus is talking about, rest from our worries fears, anxieties, past traumas, griefs, sadness, loneliness. It’s the kind of relief from internal conflict that Paul is talking about in Romans. “I do not understand my own actions.” “I can <u>will</u> what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very thing I hate”

Jesus is offering the kind of rest that we can access, no matter what happens to us, the rest that we need that gives peace of mind. “Come unto me “Take my yoke upon you, walk with me and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

But how? Just because Jesus says so? Yes, but much like the way we find ordinary rest through sleep by setting up the conditions for it, we can set up the conditions, for the rest for our souls. We have to stop trying to do it all ourselves. Jesus begins with: "Come to me," tell me, be honest, admit limits. Stop pretending you're enough by yourself. Be honest like Paul is being honest about his limitations.

Trust rather than control. Isaiah 30:15 says, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." The opposite of rest is often not work; it's anxiety, it's believing the illusion that everything depends on us. I am not God. I need to let go. I need to trust.

Live in God's presence. God told Moses: "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Rest can be relational. I can be on vacation and not be at rest. I can sit beside a hospice bed and be at rest. The difference is the awareness of God's presence. We can also read scripture and pray to be in God's presence.

We can practice the Sabbath. From Genesis on, God teaches that life is not meant to be endless production. The Sabbath says: Stop, enough. The work can wait. God is still running the universe. The sun will rise in the morning.

Rest is learned. Jesus says come to me, learn from me. We can look how Jesus lived. He withdrew to pray. When he was here as a man, He accepted his limitations. He slept in a storm. He walked instead of hurried. He trusted God the Father completely. His life is an example of how to rest.

Receive rest instead of trying to get it. Be receptive to rest. It's like grace. Grace is happening all around us all the time, we have to open our eyes, wait, and practice gratitude to see it. It's simple, but we make it hard. Jesus says, "I will <u>give</u> you rest." Rest is given. It is not earned. We can't work hard to get it.

Three other themes run through our scriptures that can help us find rest for our souls. Gentleness, humility, and love. Jesus says "I am gentle and humble." The psalmist says "The Lord is loving to everyone, and his compassion is over all his works."

If we are gentle and kind to ourselves and others, if we are humble, if we love, we will find rest and we can give rest to each other. Jesus connects rest to his character: "I am gentle and humble in heart." He does not say, "I am powerful," or "I am victorious." He is of course powerful and victorious, but he is not saying that here. Gentleness is restful because it refuses to dominate, to win. A gentle person doesn't have to defend themselves all the time. Gentleness calms fear. The opposite of gentleness is harshness, intimidation, violence, manipulation, contempt, stress. Gentleness gives safety. A child rests in the arms of gentle parents. A dying hospice patient can relax in the presence of a gentle caregiver.

Around Father's Day, I spent time with two hospice patients who both had loving daughters who loved them to the point of worship, both crying and sharing over and over how much they loved their Dads. The men had been so kind, so generous all their lives, so self -sacrificing. Both

daughters wept in the presence of their fathers. Despite having dementia, their gentleness and kindness came through. I didn't need to hear it from their daughters. Their families could grieve openly and completely because they had known a safe love. Gentleness and kindness had shaped their relationships over decades. Neither daughter was grieving a wealthy, famous, or powerful father. They were grieving good men. They may have lost many abilities, but their gentleness remained a spiritual presence, not only for their daughters, but also for me and everyone caring for them.

Jesus says he is humble. Humility also provides conditions for rest. It removes the need to strive and to push. Pride constantly asks: "Am I enough?" "How do I compare?" "How do I stay in control?" Humility says: "I can trust God." "I don't have to carry everything." "I can receive." Humility invites us out of the need to constantly prove ourselves.

And finally, love. Love removes isolation. Much of our unrest comes from feeling alone with our burdens. Paul writes in Galatians, "Bear one another's burdens." Love allows us to stop pretending. When we love and are loved, we are accepted as we are. It is exhausting to wear a mask. "I'm fine." "I'm strong." "I can do it myself." Love allows us to be honest. Jesus welcomed people who were honest and vulnerable: the blind beggar, the leper, Mary Magdalene, Peter after his denial. Love means we don't have to perform; we don't have to fake it; we can be authentic.

The scriptures begin and end with rest. In Genesis 2:1–3, God rests. "Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished... And on the seventh day, God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day... So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it." God rested. It's not that God needed to rest. Creation is complete. God delights in what is finished. The Sabbath is blessed and made holy. To rest is to enter into that holiness. Rest is more than sleep, taking a vacation, taking a break. The rest for our souls that Jesus is talking about, is the rest we find when we are living in communion with God and with each other. It includes peace, trust, safety, belonging, delight, enjoyment, freedom and love. Nothing needs to be added. Completion. Rest is wholeness, nothing is missing. Everything in harmony. Rest is life functioning exactly as God intended. Rest is weaved into creation itself. Every year crops need to lie fallow in order to be ready for the next year. The trees shed their leaves in winter.

And at the end of scriptures, in Revelation, 14:13 rest is restored. "Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord... they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them." We rest after living faithfully. Our work is complete. We have peace with God. The promise of rest extends into eternity.

I hope that today, and during the coming week, that we find rest for our bodies, minds and souls.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

Sunday Closest to July 6

Proper 9
Year A
RCL

Track 1	*or*	***Track 2***
Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 Psalm 45: 11-18 *or* Song of Solomon 2:8-13 Romans 7:15-25a Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30		Zechariah 9:9-12 Psalm 145:8-15 Romans 7:15-25a Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

The Collect

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

The servant said to Laban, "I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.'

"I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink," and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also" —let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.'

"Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to

him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left."

And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes." Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

The Response

Psalm 45: 11-18

Eructavit cor meum

11 "Hear, O daughter; consider and listen closely; *
forget your people and your father's house.
12 The king will have pleasure in your beauty; *
he is your master; therefore do him honor.
13 The people of Tyre are here with a gift; *
the rich among the people seek your favor."
14 All glorious is the princess as she enters; *
her gown is cloth-of-gold.
15 In embroidered apparel she is brought to the king; *
after her the bridesmaids follow in procession.
16 With joy and gladness they are brought, *
and enter into the palace of the king.
17 "In place of fathers, O king, you shall have sons; *
you shall make them princes over all the earth.
18 I will make your name to be remembered
from one generation to another; *
therefore nations will praise you for ever and ever."

or

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.
My beloved speaks and says to me:
"Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away."

or

Old Testament

Zechariah 9:9-12

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set yo
ur prisoners free from the waterless pit.
Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

T0he Psalm

Psalm 145:8-15

Exaltabo te, Deus

8 The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
9 The LORD is loving to everyone *
and his compassion is over all his works.
10 All your works praise you, O LORD, *
and your faithful servants bless you.
11 They make known the glory of your kingdom *
and speak of your power;
12 That the peoples may know of your power *
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; *
your dominion endures throughout all ages.
14 The LORD is faithful in all his words *
and merciful in all his deeds.
15 The LORD upholds all those who fall; *
he lifts up those who are bowed down.

The Epistle

Romans 7:15-25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war

with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The Gospel

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."

Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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