**You Rest**

Luke 7:47-50; 8:1-3

Last week we started our eight-week series *Meet Jesus*. ***Our goal for this series is two-fold.*** First, we want to remind our regulars of the goodness and glory of Jesus - we want to rekindle that first love for King Jesus. And second, we want to clearly and simply share with our friends and neighbors the good news of the love and grace and life-changing power of King Jesus.

Last week we studied ***what it means to be CALLED***. We opened up John chapter 3 and a very important conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus, a prominent Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. We saw four:

**Signs that God is Calling You:**

1. You’ve seen the **Power** of God
2. You feel **Drawn** to Jesus
3. You know you need a **Change**
4. You realize **Jesus is the One** who can change you

Nicodemus was drawn to Jesus and maybe sensed that he needed a change in his life, but wasn’t yet ready to make that change or commit fully to Jesus as Lord. This illustrates for us that **change is a PROCESS**. People don’t just hear about Jesus and immediately turn away from everything that used to be important in their lives. They need time and relationship and patience and conversations to take small steps toward Jesus.

We also briefly introduced four kinds of people:

**Four Kinds of People:**

* Nicodemus - self-righteous
* Mary Magdalene - self-loathing
* Matthew - self-focused
* Simon - self-reliant

Obviously **people are complicated** and everyone is a mixture of these four types - but often people fall into one of these primary categories.

* Many people around us are like **Nicodemus** - they are good, hard-working folks with family values who go to church, pay their taxes, and coach T-ball. Like Nicodemus, they don’t realize that they are SELF-righteous, they just feel like they do their best and God should accept that.
* Other people are like **Mary Magdalene** - who we will focus on today. They know they are sinners, they know they’re a mess. In fact, they’re so aware of this fact that they wouldn’t dare show up at church - they wouldn’t feel worthy to be among such well dressed, well behaved “righteous people.”
* Some are like **Matthew** - at some point they sold out - to money or business or the world or just to their own desires. Probably they were wounded and ran to the place they felt most confident or could find the most success.
* The final group are like **Simon** - they know that no one else in this cold, hard world is going to help them so they better help themselves. These people are not religious like Nicodemus, but they are hard working like him. They are busy and will hide behind that to delay or deflect spiritual conversations.

***Which of those best described YOU?*** What were you like when you first heard Jesus calling your name? When you first felt drawn to Him?

We just heard the end of Luke 7 and the beginning of Luke 8. An old Pope - over 1,000 years ago - decreed that these two women were one and the same, which is why that idea is out there. Most scholars today agree they are not the same person - since it would have been super easy for Luke to indicate that they were and he did not. But I think Luke put these stories right next to each other on purpose so let’s learn from them and focus on ***how Jesus meets with troubled people and gives them PEACE.***

Last week we focused on the self-righteous. Today we look at the self-loathing - the hurting, the broken, the lost and sinful. We will see **four steps to finding peace**. And of course, they center on Jesus, the Giver of Peace.

**How to Find Peace:**

“Soon afterward he went on through the cities and villages proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.” Luke 8:1

Soon after the encounter with the sinful woman and the Pharisee, Jesus went around preaching throughout all the towns and villages. It literally says here he was “preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God.” I like the ESV translation “BRINGING” the good news. ***He wasn’t just talking about the kingdom, he was BRINGING IT.*** Jesus was showing people what the kingdom looked like and felt like - and that sinful woman who was forgiven was a fantastic case study.

***She was not experiencing PEACE on the daily.*** She was living the exact opposite - desperation, hunger, vulnerability. Women don’t choose prostitution in the guidance counselor’s office as their preferred career path. They are forced into it by difficulties in life and by men taking advantage of them. This woman was living in the absence of peace, the opposite of wholeness and wellness and hope. She was living in the dark, scraping together enough to get by every day and then - without other options - giving herself away again, and again.

No doubt she hated that life and hated herself but could not find a way out. Until she heard about Jesus.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Come to **Jesus**

“And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house…” Luke 7:37

That’s the first step to finding peace - come to Jesus. This woman couldn’t have known what would happen - but ***she had heard or seen something about Jesus*** that drew her to Him. Maybe she had seen his miracles and knew he touched lepers and hung out with tax collectors and women like her.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Come to **Jesus**

“And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears…” Luke 7:38

In this entire encounter **the woman never says a word**. Isn’t that remarkable? It’s just like we saw last week in John 3, referring to the time ***when Moses made the bronze serpent*** and set it on a pole in the center of the camp. The Jews didn’t have to say anything or do anything - all they had to do was LOOK at the pole and they would be healed from a lethal snake bite.

That’s what this woman did - she simply came to Jesus, looking on him in faith. And look at the result in verse 50.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Come to **Jesus**

“And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’” Luke 7:50

Oh brother, sister, friend - **hear those words from the Lord Jesus today**: “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” You can experience SHALOM today - true health and wholeness, peace and safety, hope and joy. Jesus will say those words to your spirit today if you will just come to Him! Let’s walk through the four steps this woman took - and Mary Magdalene took - and every sinner before and after those ladies took - to find peace in the Lord Jesus.

Listen to Jesus’ personal invitation in Matthew 11:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

These three simple verses show us **the four steps to peace**. The first one, we’ve already seen, is to come to Jesus. There is no other person, no other place, no other product that can give you true peace. Only Jesus. Come to Him. Second:

**How to Find Peace:**

1. **Surrender** your struggles and sins to Him

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

The image Jesus uses here is of ***a tired and weary OX***. Don’t be offended that the Lord compares us to a farm animal. If you are ok being a sheep in the flock of the Good Shepherd why not be an ox out in his field? But Jesus says his yoke is easy - which means that there are ***other yokes out there that are heavy*** and burdensome.

That’s certainly how it was with **the Pharisees**. They had established hundreds and hundreds of detailed rules and regulations for what a “good Jew” could and could not do - especially on the Sabbath (which is especially ironic since the Sabbath was entirely meant as a gift of peace and rest!).

It is significant that this encounter with a sinful woman happens in the home of a Pharisee. The woman goes home that night with the peace of Jesus and his words ringing in her ears and in her heart, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” The Pharisee did not hear those words from Jesus.

So it’s possible - even likely - to hear the same words about Jesus and leave unchanged. The question is whether you are ready to SURRENDER. ***Are you ready to change?*** Are you ready to let go of your past life and find a new life in Jesus? Are you tired enough from the weight of the yoke you are carrying to cast it aside and take the yoke of Jesus upon you? That’s what the woman was doing.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. **Surrender** your struggles and sins to Him

“Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.” Luke 7:44

Here is a sinful woman - as unclean as someone could be - touching Jesus, weeping on him. ***The Pharisee is sitting back in disgust***, judging Jesus as a false prophet for allowing such a wicked sinner to touch him and be near him. The Pharisee would make no such compromise! He would not be tarnished by one so dark and evil!

***But what was happening in those moments?*** As the woman knelt at Jesus feet, weeping and washing his feet and kissing them and anointing them with expensive ointment - what was she doing? Jesus interpreted it as an expression of FAITH, based on which he pronounced her forgiven and spoke PEACE over her.

She not only came to Jesus, ***she knelt before him in total surrender.*** She yielded to Him everything she was, all she had done, all she had become. She bowed before Him as her KING.

This simple act of kneeling at the feet of Jesus illustrates both repentance and faith. She renounced her old life of sin, laying that down. And she committed herself to Jesus and His way moving forward.

Oh, beloved - ***have you taken this decisive, life-altering step with Jesus?*** Have you surrendered to Him every burden and sin and struggle of your life? Have you fallen on your knees before King Jesus recently? Maybe you need to do that today.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. **Surrender** your struggles and sins to Him

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.” Matthew 11:28-29

What is the yoke you have been carrying? Is it a religious yoke like **Nicodemus**? Are you burdened by a never-ending list of do’s and don’ts that you can never accomplish? Do you feel the weight of God’s Law hanging over you, condemning you? Lay down that yoke of self-righteousness and surrender it to Jesus!

Maybe your yoke is like this **sinful woman** - a yoke of pain and brokenness, of self-medicating, hiding in the shadows - a burden of self-loathing and fear and hopelessness. Lay it down before King Jesus. Kneel at His feet and release your fears and your hurts - bring it all to him!

Maybe your yoke is like **Mary Magdalene** - a yoke of oppression and confusion, of slavery and dark power. Christians can’t be possessed by demons, but they can certainly be attacked and deceived and seriously influenced. Non-Christians CAN be possessed by demons. “The best trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he doesn’t exist.” Oh, the devil exists, and our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the rulers and authorities, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Maybe you’re like **Matthew** - burdened by the yoke of your own selfishness, your betrayals of your own convictions and family values - maybe you sold out to work and money, for the sake of power and glory.

Maybe you’re like **Simon** - weighed down by the many demands of life - just trying to make it from one day to the next - scrambling to pay bills and get your next catch of fish.

Whatever your burdens - whatever your sins and struggles - you will never find peace until you ***lay them all down at the feet of Jesus.*** Just bow your head right now and close your hands - tighten them into fists - and imagine your struggles and burdens in your hands. What are you holding onto today? What is weighing you down?

Hold those fists tight and feel the weight of that yoke. It is heavy. It is burdensome. You can’t carry it alone. You are like an ox doing all the work alone - and the ground is hard and rocky - the plow will hardly move anymore.

***Now picture yourself bowing before King Jesus and open your hands.*** Release everything - your struggles, your sins, your burdens, your fears. Lay it all down at His feet. Feel the peace and freedom of letting it go. Hear the gentle voice of the Good Shepherd inviting you, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest!”

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Commit fully to Jesus as **King**

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.” Matthew 11:29

**Repentance and faith** are two sides of the same coin. Both are necessary and they go together. You have to let go of your old life and then turn and take hold of Jesus so He can give you a new life.

It’s beautiful that the sinful woman didn’t say anything - but her act of coming to him was an act of repentance and faith. It was a baptism of sorts - but the water supplied came from her own tears. What I mean by that is that it was a decisive turning point. And that’s what you need if you are going to find peace.

***You must draw a line in the sand*** - and step across it - knowing that your entire old life is left behind and your life with Jesus will be entirely new. You are embracing a new YOKE.

<https://voice.dts.edu/article/the-yoke-of-jesus-j-dwight-pentecost/>

***The Pharisees had a system that they oversaw***, that they interpreted - and they placed that yoke on the people. They expected the Jews to follow their rules and regulations and they publicly punished any who failed to do so. But Jesus often pointed out the fact that the Pharisees didn’t follow their own rules because it was impossible to actually do so. You could impose the burden on others, but no one could actually carry that heavy yoke.

But Jesus was totally different. He said, “Come to me… learn from me… take MY YOKE upon you.” In other words, ***I’ll carry the load with you***. Team up with me. And what you find, in being yoked to Jesus, is that He has carried the load for us. We simply commit to Him and His ways and start walking with Him, and He does the heavy lifting. Our job is simply to keep in step with Him.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Commit fully to Jesus as **King**

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me… and you will find rest for your souls” Matthew 11:29

What a promise from King Jesus! If you just commit your life to me as your King, you will find rest! Not just an external, physical rest - like all the Sabbath rules that were imposed from on high. But a deep, personal, internal rest for the soul.

Now, think about Mary Magdalene.

1. Commit fully to Jesus as **King**

“And also some women, who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.” Luke 8:2

That’s all the description we get of Mary’s back story. She factors into the resurrection accounts in a major way. But other than this note that she was seriously demon possessed, we don’t know her story.

***What we DO know is that she sold out to Jesus.*** She was faithful through his public ministry - all the way to the cross and to the tomb. Mary Magdalene is the surprising hero of the resurrection - mentioned in all four gospel accounts. The only reason that detail was included is simply because it was true. Her testimony would not have carried any weight in a Jewish court or even in Jewish culture of the first century. She would have been doubly disqualified - first as a woman and second as a formerly troubled woman.

Luke shows us that Mary was not the only woman on the team - he mentions Joanna who was married to King Herod’s household manager…

1. Commit fully to Jesus as **King**

“And Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.” Luke 8:3

Mary was one of MANY WOMEN who travelled with Jesus and supported the ministry out of “their means.” That indicates that some of them were wealthy and had some independent means and others may have been able to work and sell clothing or other items to support the ministry directly.

The point is - they were committed. They were devoted followers of Jesus. And Mary wasn’t the only one who had been healed by Jesus - this whole list falls under those “healed of evil spirits and infirmities.” They were devoted to Jesus because they had been changed by Jesus.

They had found rest in Him - they had found SHALOM.

And that brings us to our fourth step to finding peace in Jesus.

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Become a **Peace-Bringer**

“He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.” Luke 8:1

One of the signs that you have really found the peace of Jesus is that you start SPREADING IT. The soul-cure of the gospel is not meant to stop in you - it is meant to flow through you to others. ***The gospel is supposed to be CONTAGIOUS.*** In fact, the gospel was the first truly viral message in all of history. It literally changed the world as it spread from person to person and country to country.

Right after this brief description of Jesus’ travelling companions, the Lord teaches a great crowd from the surrounding region the parable of the SOWER. Look at the conclusion of this teaching:

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Become a **Peace-Bringer**

“As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.” Luke 8:15

The sign of a good heart that has truly received the seed of the gospel is FRUIT - 30, 60, 100 fold. Hear the word, believe it, hold fast to it and BEAR FRUIT. Sharing the good news with others is not the only fruit but it is an important product of someone who has been changed by the Lord Jesus.

Just a few verses later Jesus heals a demon possessed man and won’t let that man come along with him but instead sends him back to his own town:

**How to Find Peace:**

1. Become a **Peace-Bringer**

“Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you.” Luke 8:39

The man who had terrorized that region - running around naked and in broken chains - was now a bringer of peace to that region - a messenger of God’s shalom. He experienced peace and freedom in Jesus and was immediately sent out to proclaim that peace and freedom to others.

We often think you need a lot of training and education in evangelism and apologetics before you should go out and share the gospel with others. But history and experience show that the best evangelist is the brand-new believer. They are excited. They have just experienced the grace of God to forgive them and the power of God to change them - so we shouldn’t hide them away in a closet - we should send them out as Jesus did!

We should train and send them to be peace-bringers!

I know that sharing the gospel feels stressful for some people - maybe for most people. You think to yourself, “I’m not a salesman. I’m not a preacher. How could I tell someone else about Jesus?

But look again at the instruction to the man who was just possessed by a legion of demons. ***“Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you.”*** Wouldn’t you say you’re at least as qualified as that guy? Or Mary Magdelene? Or Matthew the tax collector? Or Simon the fisherman? Maybe not Nicodemus, but certainly Thaddeus or Philip or Andrew or Joanna or Susanna?

Let’s close with the invitation in Matthew 11.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus offers everyone PEACE. Shalom. He invites everyone to come to Him and find rest. The only way to find peace is first to come to Jesus. Look on Him in faith and surrender all of your struggles and sins to Him. Fall on your knees before Him and commit fully to Him as your King. Trade the heavy yoke of religion and legalism for the light yoke of the gospel. Bind yourself to Jesus and you will find Him to be gentle and lowly of heart. You will quickly see that He has done the hard work already on the cross.

Surrender to Him and “you will find rest for your soul.”

Bow before King Jesus and hear Him say again to you the words he said to the sinful woman: “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” “Your sins are forgiven.”

Rest in the Lord Jesus. Stop striving. Stop stressing. Jesus is our Sabbath Rest. He is our PEACE. Come to Him today!