**“Rest”**

Psalm 145:1-19

Zechariah 9:9-12

Romans 7:14-25a

Matthew 11:25-30

Pentecost 6

Jesus said “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.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

We are now firmly in what gets called in the Northern Hemisphere the “**Dog Days of Summer**”. From July 3rd to August 11th (but longer feeling in Tennessee), we’re experiencing the **hot season**, brutal as the weather in our area gets.

Named by the Greeks and Romans for the **star Sirius** (meaning “**glowing**” and “**scorching**”, but also “**big dog**”), these were the dates of its closest alignment to the sun … also presumed to bring, with its alignment and heat, fevers and even catastrophe.

We have air conditioning (so try to live in it), but work and walk outside mid-day is stifling. Storms (just because of the **sky’s unrest**) provide momentary breaks, but breaks have to be taken for water and a “sit down” … to even catch one’s breath and avoid the onslaught of any possible heatstroke. Warm and “**muggy**” seems to be the kindest way to put this time of summer’s weather situation.

And it’s difficult to concentrate and focus / think in this **“low-pressure” environment**. Sitting quietly and thinking about not much of anything makes us look almost **doglike** doing just as we see our canine friends do sprawled-out, showing very little energy.

The “**Dog Days of Summer**” are upon us.

**Text**

Paul (from his Epistle to the Romans) would tell us that the “Dog Days of Summer” physical discomforts aren’t the only stresses. For those wanting to “do better” and be more appropriately focused (thinking straight and right), the emotional and (more importantly) **spiritual discrepancies** are beyond “dog dayish”, and **really can account for** “warm and muggy” oppressiveness without the gift of “air conditioning- and refreshing” graciousness of God.

“I do not understand my own actions”, Paul says of himself. “I do not do what I want, but rather I do what I do not want. It’s sin that dwells within me that moves me. For (when I’m honest) I know that nothing **Good enough for God** dwells in me, for I desire to do what is right, but don’t have the **ability** to carry it entirely and perfectly out. I do not do, then, the good that I want, but the evil I do not want to do is what I end up doing too much of. Sin dwells within me … wretched man that I am!” And he asks this extremely honest eternally significant question: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

I have to **stop there for a moment**. No longer are we dealing with the **temporariness of torrid temperatures**. “Who will deliver me from **this body of** **death**?” Paul asks. And it’s a temporal and potential eternally-existence scenario. **A body of death requires deliverance**. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, **your King** is coming to you; righteous and **having salvation is He**”, and “salvation” is the only deliverance from a “body of death”, and Zechariah (Old Testament prophet) says that “humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey is the “King, righteous and having **salvation**.”

See, the topic today is **death**, yet **rest from it**. Everyone wants to **be “good”** just like Paul says he does. And there’s the general desire of humans to exude a goodness. But there’s this “death” thing so it’s far less than adequate to lower the concept of “rest” to, just, moments that are not as bad feeling as other moments, or (and I’ve heard it said) a (quote) “rest” **dead** but not accounting for a conscious either heavenly option or hell (and “**Hell’s Heat**” dwarfs mid-summers’ with no relief … ever).

And the “**rest**” Jesus speaks of isn’t, just, time in air conditioning or a gulp of cold water … it’s not splashing in a pool or a refreshing breeze. It’s **safety … being saved (salvation)** from the worst catastrophe and feverish condition the “Dog Days of Summer” could ever remind us of. It’s **hope** where hopelessness is the only other option. It’s **confidence** where only despair would sink in otherwise. It’s **joy (beyond happiness)** when only justified eternal sadness could never (without it) be escaped or avoided.

“Come **to Me**”, Jesus said, “all who labor and are heavy laden” (burdens or situations oppressive physically but, most and mostly, the burden of eternal hopelessness). If **there (or any ‘semblance to there)**, **I** (your King who has come humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foul of a donkey, to suffer the “Dog Days” of temptation not given into then sacrifice to the Hell of death in a place we don’t have to die-in because of it), “**I** will give you rest”, that He can offer and give. “**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** **in Me**. For My yoke **is easy**, and My burden **is light**.”

**Application**

“Come to Me” and “learn from Me” and “take My yoke” are **process** phrases (invitation yet **pathways**). Paul spoke for **his own desire made new** by Jesus’ interception of him on a travel road to Damascus and “daughters of Zion” and “daughters of Jerusalem” identifies **US** (the baptized and believing / with hope) as so grabbed by Jesus’ call to “come and learn and take”. We’re promised a “**restored double**” Zechariah tells us of, and **that’s “rest” eternally and “rest” even now in this life because of the eternal part**. Every cool breeze need remind us of the **saving refreshedness of peace with God, our being redeemed and returned to Him**. Every ice-filled drink remind us of **Christ’s promise of Himself inside of us, filling us as is our baptismal promise of “living water” cooling and Good**. Every splash of a swim remind us of the **promised washing and regeneration of a baptism from death into life / restoration to the covenant with God by Jesus’ bloodshed**. Every celebration of cooled, conditioned, air remind us of a **surrounded safety and pleasure of FORGIVENESS and a STATE OF GRACE, BAPTIZED AS AN ADOPTED CHILD (DAUGHTER OR SON OF GOD)**. ….

**Summer’s “Dog Days”** are a **SEASON ONLY** for those with the “easy and light yoke” of Jesus (His cross and **SAVING** gift of Himself dying then rising). “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Paul concludes.

God has given us **innumerable hints at relief** from any oppressiveness that the world **fallen** can inflict. He grants us **warmth** in winter, **love of beauty** in the changing seasons and **shade** in the heat of summer. He gifts **healing skills of disease** through doctors and protecting skills through law enforcement and the military. He gifts **friendship and family** where loneliness could be our only experience. He gifts **sanctuary and awareness of blessing** in His Church, feeding and the knowledge of divine Words gotten and heard as we gather for it. And God gifts to **see us** (baptized into His Son and believing in what that promises in life eternal and a kinship with Him) **as He sees Jesus**. We are forgiven … so at “rest”, to forever be …

… and **for that (with Paul)**, “**thanks be** to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!? In His name (+Jesus). Amen.