

Come to Me, and I Will Give You Rest

Matthew 11:16-19, 11:25-30

Resting Time in Korea

Juhee and I visited Korea for a month and had a wonderful time with family and friends. It had been 13 years since my last visit, so I was a bit apprehensive about how much things may have changed. I thought I might feel like a fish out of water in Korea. But as soon as I set foot on Korean soil, everything felt so familiar and comforting. The sight of those small hills and green mountains passing by brought a sense of peace to my heart. I relished every meal I had, finding even the Korean hamburger tastier than its American counterpart. If you cannot trust me, go to Korea. It took only 14 hours to get there.

Of course, there were changes in Korea, but you know what surprised me the most? The smart parking lot system. In Providence Place mall, you'd normally get a parking ticket at the entrance. I expected the same in Korea. But to my surprise, there was no parking ticket machine at the mall there. Instead, the system automatically recognized the license plate, and all I had to do was tell my plate number at the store, and they covered the parking for me. Initially, Juhee and I struggled to figure out how to get a parking ticket and pay for it, but apart from that, everything else felt like home. Because, you know, home is always home.

[ppt] The highlight of my trip was reuniting with my family and friends after being apart for 13 years. Being with family is comforting and relaxing because I could feel their love for Juhee and me. Some say, "Once a mom, always a mom. No matter how grown the kids are, they will always be your precious babies in your eyes!" Juhee and I experienced the true meaning of that saying. During our stay at my mother-in-law's house, a small mosquito bothered us at night. It kept buzzing in our ears, waking us up, but we couldn't catch it. Eventually, Juhee and I turned on the light in the living room, where we slept, and tried to find this small and irritating creature. My mother-in-law also woke up due to the noise we made, but despite that, we couldn't locate the mosquito, so we went back to bed. Then, my mother-in-law opened her room's door and turned on the light as she went to bed. Do you know why? Mosquitoes are drawn to light. She wanted her children to have a restful sleep, so she didn't mind sacrificing her own comfort. Eventually, we found a mosquito repellent coil, and we all managed to get a good night's sleep. I could feel the deep love of a mother for her children, regardless of how grown up they are. Juhee and I were able to rest during that night and throughout our stay in Korea because of the love we received and shared with our family and the people we met. That love is what truly makes a home a home!

Jesus, our resting place

Love is like a resting place, a shelter from the storm. It provides comfort and warmth in times of trouble. The memory of love brings us home, to a resting place. Where is your resting place? Family, friends, or perhaps solitude in a place of your own. But we all know that our true resting place is one: Jesus Christ.

In today's scripture reading, Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (v. 28) We can find rest for our souls in Jesus Christ because of His unconditional love for us. In this restless world, it is important to remember this everlasting resting place.

Life is often hard, and we can become tired and exhausted. Some people work tirelessly for a living, while others battle with illnesses like cancer. Life is tough, and weariness sets in.

However, sometimes people work themselves to exhaustion because they are obsessed with their work or pursuing the wrong purpose. During my visit to Korea, Juhee and I met a friend and his wife who used to be a young adult member of my church in Boston. They got married two years ago and now have an adorable baby. During our conversation, his wife complained that he had not changed his work-centered lifestyle even after having a daughter. He didn't take paternity leave and continued working even on the day of his daughter's birth. He was tired due to the new responsibilities of caring for a child, such as changing diapers and helping her fall asleep! He could have reduced his workload, but he didn't. He is the youngest full professor in his school and has published over three hundred articles. He has achieved much at a young age, and although he could have taken some time to relax, he couldn't. I asked him what makes him restless and work like a clockwork bunny that never rests. I believe we all need to ask ourselves the same question if we are tired and exhausted. The good news is that Jesus invites all who are weary.

Jesus also calls out to those who carry heavy burdens. The heavy burdens Jesus refers to were religious guilt and fear imposed by religious leaders. This was what the Pharisees did to people who were already struggling with their daily lives. With their religious zeal, they would say, "This is a sin, and that is a sin." When John the Baptist lived an ascetic life, they said, "He has a demon." When Jesus celebrated God-driven life by eating, drinking and having a party with all people, they said, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" The Pharisees were the ones who turned the Ten Commandments into over 600 laws, burdening everyone under their weight. However, Jesus came to fulfill the law and simplified it into two things: to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus taught that the purpose of the law was not to condemn people but to save and love them.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and 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."

Jesus assures us that we will find rest for our souls. "To find" implies actively seeking what is in Jesus, rather than simply sitting still and doing nothing. To those who are weary and worried about their lives, Jesus reminds us of our generous Creator who provides for the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field. Trusting in God is a way to liberate ourselves from weariness and worry. To those burdened with religious guilt and fear, Jesus taught them to live under the grace of God through His act of unconditional love for all, including sinners and tax collectors who were despised by society. His love became a resting place for all, and that love had transformative power.

Be a Resting Place for Others!

As the body of Christ, we are called to be a resting place for all, a place of love that is open to everyone. During my visit to Korea, I reconnected with my old friends from seminary. They are all pastors, and some of them are interested in the issue of human sexuality, knowing that the UMC has become divided on this matter. In the Korean Methodist Church, discussing this issue has become taboo. So, like old times, we debated about it. My position was that regardless of one's stance on LGBTQI, we need to welcome them as they are, because Jesus also accepted sinners, tax collectors, and people of all kinds just as they were. In my understanding, true salvation for them meant that Jesus sat with them, became their friend, and embraced them as they were. However, my friend argued that we are not Jesus. Yet, I countered that we are called to be the body of Christ! I know we are not perfect, but I still believe that we are the

sacred body of Christ and that we can be a resting place for all. We can fill this house of worship with the love that Christ instills in us. Just as we find rest in Christ, we can also be a loving and comforting place for those who are weary and burdened.

When our time in Korea came to an end, Juhee and I had to think about returning to the United States. We had to consider sermons, worship preparations, and the tasks awaiting us upon our return. It brought some stress, but at the same time, we were excited to come back to our home here in Rhode Island and the loving communities we are sent to serve. You have been a loving family to us in this new land. You have been a resting place for us. So, thank you, and let us continue to build our church as a loving and comforting place for others. Amen.