

## Wesley United Methodist Church

July 6, 2014

"...and I will give you rest."

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, Matthew 11:25-30.

Artist, sculptor and inventor Leonardo da Vinci was interested in about anything of consequence. He had an intense curiosity about birds and how they flew. He studied their wings and modeled helicopters, parachutes, and flying machines based on their anatomy. The freedom and movement of birds served as a metaphor for da Vinci's life. In the course of his frequent strolls through the streets of Florence, Italy, da Vinci often encountered merchants selling caged birds. Frequently he stopped, paid the purchase price, then opened the door of the cage and released the birds to the endless blue sky. Such was his passion for freedom.

I hope as you have celebrated this Independence Day weekend, you have given some thought to the passion for freedom those men and women had a little more than 200 years ago who devoted their lives to creating this nation. I hope, as you are reminded of da Vinci buying those caged birds on the streets of Florence and then setting them free, you also give some thought to the one who purchased our freedom by the giving of his life on Calvary's tree.

Our text for the day is a perfect one for a holiday weekend when we get some time off to rest and relax. It reminds me of a woman who opened her refrigerator one day and saw a rabbit sitting on one of the shelves. "What are you doing in there?" she asked. The rabbit replied: "This is a Westinghouse, isn't it?" The woman replied, "Yes." "Well,," said the rabbit, "I'm westing."

Bad!! I know, but resting is what our text is all about today.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened," said the Master on one occasion, "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."

That's a promise that many of us need to hear. We're tired...for many reasons. Some of us are tired because we work too hard. In China the polite answer to the question of "How are you?" is to say, "I am very busy, thank you." It is the measure of our success, on how we run this world and how we measure our lives, no matter where we live. And we have made an idol out of our busy-ness, no wonder we are tired.

Even more of us are tired because we worry too much. To a great extent, much fatigue is mental. Our body feels tired not because our bodies have been too active, but because our thoughts have been in overdrive dealing with fear, anxiety, and stress. Worry and stress are killers. Someone said that no man ever collapsed because of the burdens of the day; it is when the burdens of tomorrow are added to the cares of today that person begins to sink. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand if you ever feel stressed out because of your work, or because of family concerns or worries about your health or whatever may be weighing you down mentally. The estimates are that 80% of Americans are under at least a moderate load of stress.

To a great extent, fatigue is mental. Have you ever noticed that people who have a great mental attitude seem to have more energy than those who have a gloomy attitude toward life? It's true.

Tommy Lasorda, the long-time manager of the LA Dodgers, used to tell a story from his younger days. He was a manager in the minor leagues in 1971, when his team lost seven straight games. About that time the sports writers across the country had voted to select the greatest major league team in the history of baseball. By a vast majority vote the honor went to the 1927 Yankees.

Defeated and exhausted from their consecutive losses, Tommy Lasorda's team headed for the locker room. A few minutes later he walked in and found all the players sitting around, dejected, with their heads down. "Hey, get your heads up," Tommy Lasorda yelled. "I don't ever want to see you fellows with your heads down again. Just because you lost seven games doesn't mean you're not a great team. You're going to start winning! As you know, according to a recent poll, the greatest team to ever play in the major leagues was the Yankees in 1927. And they lost nine straight games!"

Suddenly heads went up and expressions changed. It was the turning point. The team started winning, and by the end of the season they were champions. Hearing about this story a few days later his wife asked, "Tommy,

are you sure the Yankees lost nine games in a row?" "How could I know?" Tommy answered. "I was only a year old. But it made the point."

It did make a point. The team needed to believe that success was possible. The team needed to know that seven consecutive losses did not make the losers. There is something energizing about positive belief. It would be good to remind ourselves from time to time that our faith is an entirely positive belief about life. That is why we call the Gospel the Good News. We are loved and our God has good things in store for those who love him.

There is something about a troubled mind that can rob us of sleep. And for many people this is a serious problem. Did you know that next to alcohol, and texting, sleep deprivation is the leading cause of serious accidents and injuries? It is also a leading cause of poor productivity. Being able to sleep well is a gift, and I hope that all of you are so gifted. But many of us pride ourselves on being able to push through our need for sleep.

A certain family was visiting New York City for the first time. They were dazzled by the sights and the bustling crowds of Manhattan. "This is the city that never sleeps," the father told his eleven-year-old daughter. "That's probably because there's a Starbucks on every corner," she observed.

Some of us are running on caffeine and ignoring the possible health costs, or productivity costs, or even possibly the cost of our overall feeling of well-being. The most pleasant and useful persons are those who leave some of the problems of the universe for God to worry about.

Did you know that the word "worry" is used 13 times in Scripture? Compare that with "trust" which is 126 times, "faith" which is used 270 times, "believe" which is used 226 times, and "love" which is used 551 times. If you want to narrow it down even more, of the 13 times that worry is used, 11 times we are told not to worry and of the other two, one asks, "why do you worry" and the other one says, "Tomorrow will worry about itself." Get yourself in time with your difficulties. Then get in harmony with God, and you will ride out your difficulties without strain.

That is the sort of thing Christ was talking about when he said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened 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."

If you are going to insist on carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders alone, you are going to be a very tired individual. Let me give you some Good News. There is One who loves you very much who will take your burden upon His shoulders if you will trust him. I hope this holiday weekend will find you rested and refreshed, but I hope even more that you will let Christ rest and refresh you through every day of your life. Amen.