

Sermon Notes of Guest Speaker Greg Williams' Sermon on August 2, 2015 "Restlessness"

[In today's sermon, Director of GCI Church Administration, guest speaker Greg Williams shows Jesus' response to us when we experience restlessness, stress, and anxiety in our lives.]

Notes:

Introduction:

- Greg and his wife, Susan, moved from North Carolina to southern California last summer.
- First their home was up for sale for 6 months before someone even made an offer – that was stressful.
- Then, in the midst of packing up their belongings for the 2,000 mile move to CA, Greg's father suddenly was on his death bed.
- His father had a severe infection and was suffering from respiratory failure.
- He miraculously recovered from his "death rattle" to go back to his assisted living facility where he died within two weeks.

- Needless, to say, this was a very stressful time for Greg and his brothers and their families.
- And for us, it isn't a question "if" we have experienced restlessness, stress, anxiety and heavy burdens in our lives, but "when" and "how."

Context for the key verses we will read about Jesus' answer to our needs:

- Matthew 9 – Jesus tells us that the fields are white and ready for harvest and ends by saying there is a need for more laborers.
- Matthew 10 – Jesus sends out the disciples 2 by 2 to preach about Jesus and the coming kingdom.

Matthew 11 (Revised Standard Version), 1) And when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

- Jesus followed up to teach the people after the gospel introductions made by the 12.

2) Now when John (the Baptist) heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3) and said to him, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

- John, sitting in death row has become restless.

4) And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5) the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the

dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6) And blessed is he who takes no offense at me.”

7) As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? 8) Why then did you go out? To see a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings’ houses.

9) Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10) This is he of whom it is written, ”Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.”

11) Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- Jesus is not offended or upset with John.
- Instead he praises him and in that uncanny way that Jesus does, he understands John’s anxieties and empathizes with him.
- Consider that John is awaiting impending death at the hand of Herod.
- He is on death row and he has doubts.
- Greg Williams is guessing that probably all of us will have degrees of doubt about our life up to our final breath.

12) From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.

- This imagery that Jesus spoke is troubling for many Christians.
- Some translations say that “the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it.”
- Like an army storming a city; aggressively moving in with intent, passion and purpose describes John the Baptist in his preaching.

13) For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; 14) and if you are willing to accept it, he is Eli’jah who is to come. 15) He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

16) “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates,

17) “We piped to you, and you did not dance;”

- The invitation to accept the Kingdom of God was inviting, relational.

17b) “we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

- Many times the approach was also serious and included a warning.

18) For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; 19) the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

- The human response to Jesus was fickle and did not seem reasonable.

- When we consider “Who Jesus is” and “Who humanity is” the only complete, positive, and perfect response of humanity back to God was Jesus himself.
- Jesus responded perfectly to the father for all humanity.
- It’s through Jesus that we have a relationship with God the Father.
- Jesus absorbs the negative, non-response just as he absorbs the doubt of John the Baptist, and we shall see how he absorbs our restlessness too.

25) At that time Jesus declared, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes;

26) yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. 27) All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Key passage:

28) Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29) 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.30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- What an invitation our Lord and Savior is offering to us.
- The rest isn’t about inactivity or leisure time – it’s about our rhythm of life in relationship with Jesus.
- It is a life where worry and anxiety don’t define us or over power us no matter the circumstance around us.
- It is a life depending on the full, complete, perfect response to God by Jesus on our behalf.
- Jesus imparts His faith to us – it’s not our faith.
- The concept of a “yoke” is an instrument that team two animals together – oxen or mules to plow fields or pull a cart.
- What does it mean to be teamed with Jesus as a “Yoke Fellow” with him?
 - Jesus says his yoke is light (No yoke is too heavy for Jesus).
 - Jesus brings 100% of himself to the relationship, and he invites us to bring 100% as well.
 - People who have passion and purpose go shoulder to shoulder with Jesus.
- In Philippians 4:3, the Apostle Paul refers to his co-workers in ministry as “Yoke Fellows.”
- As we are individually joined with Jesus in partnership we are also partnered together in the shared ministry of Jesus.
- Pastor Greg Williams feels this is his role as Director of CAD.
- He loves working with our CAD staff and our field pastors.
- Our pastors from the development stage as interns to the day they retire are our #1 priority in CAD.
- This year we are adding 10 interns – last year we added only 4.

What can we take home from this today?

- The invitation of Jesus to “come” to Him!
- True rest, true help, true purpose and direction is only found in Him!

- If you are overworked, come to Jesus!
- If you are carrying heavy burdens, come to Jesus!
- If you are stressed out, come to Jesus!
- If you have doubts, come to Jesus!

- As a church community, pray that God re-grows us and re-builds our congregations.

Communion:

- Our hearts are so easily distracted from God. That’s why we need to come to Jesus.
- One of the ways in which we come to Jesus is to come to the communion table.
- Coming helps us strengthen our relationship with Jesus.

Closing Prayer