

January 9, 2005
A.M. Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Stop, Look, Walk, Rest”

Jer 6:16 NLT

So now the LORD says, "Stop right where you are! Look for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!'

When Yogi Berra would give directions to his home he'd tell people, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" People laughed about that quote for years until one day Yogi's wife explained that eventually both roads of this fork merged together into the same road ... the road that led to the Berra home. So, it didn't matter which road at that fork you took thus, "when you come to the fork in the road... take it!"

That's not always the case. All roads cannot get you to the same destination. You can get very lost by taking the wrong road when you come to a fork. When I was in the Army during "Basic Training" one of the things we needed to learn was how to read a compass and a map. They put us in a wooded area gave us a compass and a map and told us to find our way out. I had no clue of what I was doing. I pretty much guessed at every decision as to which way to go and I was getting worried. It is safe to say I failed compass and map reading. And I would still be lost in those woods today if it weren't that I happened to see another soldier ran up to him, and asked him if he knew what he was doing. He said he did and I said okay I'm following you. When traveling it's easy to know when you've taken the wrong road, because you are soon lost and that could be very stressful.

In life too we stand at many crossroads and the way we choose to go is very important. All roads do not lead to the same destination. How do we know if we are choosing the right way to go in life? Jeremiah says that if you don't have rest for your soul, you are traveling a wrong path. He tells us what to do to find rest, which way to go to find rest. He tells us what road to travel. Sadly many replied, "No, that's not the road we want!" In other words there is a choice. You can choose the road that leads to rest for your soul if you want to. But you are also free to say, "No, that's not the road I want!" But we make that decision at our own risk.

When I was in the Boy Scouts we were on a trail and we had to hike around this fenced in area. On the other side of the fence was the campsite we had to get to. Someone asked, "hey why do we have to hike all the way around can't we just climb over this fence?" We were told we could not do that and we had to stay on the path. So me and a few of the others started to lag behind, we got off the trail, hid in some brush and waited until the rest of the troop was out of sight. Then we climb and jumped from the top of the fence thinking this is going to be a great short cut... until we noticed that we had jumped into an entire area of poison ivy. We learned that there is good reason to stay on the right path even if it seems easier to take another.

In life how do we go about finding the road to rest? Jeremiah gives us these steps:

1. Stop

“Stop right where you are!” We need to hear that and do it. Stop right where you are! Don’t waste another second. Right now stop what you’re doing and consider your life - Take a look under the hood. Is there rest? When you’re traveling and your vehicle is not acting right or there is a warning light on our dashboard you stop and look under the hood because you know something is wrong. If you ignore the problem it could get worse and even become dangerous. Many are looking and longing for rest for their soul. Do you have that rest? Deep in the core of your being is there rest? Stop! Don’t say you have no time to think of such things. Don’t say you have to wait for a better time. “Stop right where you are!” Don’t just look at the outside. God wants you to consider the heart. Consider: Does love for God come before love of possessions? What motivates you love or anger? How easily do you lose your temper? Do you do things to protect yourself and get what you want or do you think of others first and only? Below the surface of your life is there peace and hope or anxiety, worry, guilt and hopelessness? Is there something wrong? Stop and think about it. Take time to consider your life. Consider the words that come out of your mouth “For,” Jesus said (Matt 12:34), “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” What you say and the attitudes that come out of you are indications of what’s in your heart. So, what comes out of you, vanity, envy, bitterness, slander, lies, cheating, hypocrisy, bad temper? If so, is your heart at rest? God may use others to help you consider your heart. Listen to the criticism of others instead of defending yourself. It’s not easy to hear but God wants to use your critics to help you look at yourself. How would people describe you – people at work, your family? Be honest with yourself. If there is no rest in your soul then, according to Jeremiah you are on a wrong path. You are traveling a path to destruction, a path without peace. It is time to ...

2. Look

“Look for the old, godly way.” Why is it old? Because God’s way has not changed. God is the same yesterday, today and always. What He said was wrong yesterday is wrong today and will be wrong tomorrow. And what He said was right yesterday will be right today and tomorrow. It is the old reliable way, the way you can trust for the rest you need. And it is a godly way... Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:28-29 NLT). The road to rest starts with trusting in Jesus and continually trusting Him by keeping in step with His teachings. Do you know His teachings? What does God have to say about being honest, holy, moral? What does He have to say about putting Him first in all things and putting others before yourself? What does the Bible teach about relationships with: Spouse, parents, children, employers, employees, neighbors, relatives, siblings, other Christians? How much time are you spending in the Word of God and prayer? Get back to your first love. Look again at the old godly way of living. Have you considered God’s ways? Then...

3. Walk

Don't just look for the old, godly way – “walk in it. Travel its path...” We are saved by faith and not by what we do, but faith, if it is real, will be proven by what we do. It is not enough to know the godly way – to know God's way; we must also obey it – do it. Rest will not come merely by knowing you need rest and looking into God's Word / way. It is not enough to study the teachings of Jesus. You must obey God to find rest. Walk with God; travel the path of godly living. It's a journey. We must be continually learning, continually walking with God day-by-day, moment-by-moment. If we fail Him immediately ask His forgiveness and keep on walking. We are not blessed simply by knowing but by doing. When we *obey* God He is with us as He told Moses, (Ex 33:14 NIV), "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

4. Rest

If you will stop to take a check of your life, admit the unrest, look at God's way and walk in it “you will find rest for your souls.” You will find peace that transcends understanding.

Jeremiah was warning that if people did not get back to God and did not get back to obeying God's commandments they were headed for destruction. He begged them to stop, look and walk with God putting God first and obeying Him at all times. God desires the best for us ...rest, peace and not destruction. Everyone wants rest in their souls. It comes only from living godly, holy lives. You are free to reply, “No, that's not the road we want!” But Jesus warned (Matt 7:13-14): "Enter through the narrow gate (of following Him). For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

“So now the LORD says, "Stop right where you are! Look for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls.”