

“Come, I’ll give you rest!” Mat 11:25-30

“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labour 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.”

Today, looking at our Gospel reading, we will try to answer a couple of very important questions. First, who can receive our message? Second, what is our message? Who can receive our message and what is our message?

So, who can receive it? This may seem to be a bit strange a question. One would think that our message is for all nations, for all people, isn’t it? Sure, we can agree that it is addressed to all people. But not everybody can receive it.

As Jesus said: **„I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.”** How do we understand it?

Does God hide’s His message from those who are wise and understanding and reveal it only to little children? Does it mean that to be wise and understanding is a bad thing and we’d rather need to be like little children? Is Jesus against intellect and thinking? Is He promoting ignorance and foolishness?

Of course, not. If this was Jesus goal why would He specifically emphasize teaching in the Great Commission? Make disciples by... teaching them everything! Why would the Old and the New Testament put such an emphases on the pursuit for true wisdom? Psalm 1, ‘Blessed in the man ... who meditates on God’s instructions day and night.’

What Jesus is saying – we need to have the right mindset and the right attitude if we want to receive God’s message. He describes this attitude as being like little children. What does this mean? What qualities do little children have? And Jesus uses word

that actually designates infants. So what qualities do infants have, we may wonder, what makes them fitting to receive God's message?

The answer is - infants don't have any particular qualities. We can almost say that this their unique quality is absence of all qualities. Infants are totally dependent on adults. They wouldn't survive without someone who takes care of them. All that they need for their lives they receive from their parents. Every day.

What Jesus is here saying is similar to His first words in the Sermon on the Mount. **"Blessed are the poor in the spirit!"** The same idea. Blessed are those who recognize that we are utterly dependent on God's grace.

That every minute, every day is God's given, that He continually gives us life and provides for all the necessary to sustain it. He does it all. He gives us our daily bread. As our Creator and our Father. We are just recipients of His grace and love. His creatures and through baptism also His children.

This is such a liberating reality. Embrace it. God who knows what we need promises to care for us, for you. And He is faithful, so you can trust Him and rely upon Him whatever is happening in the world around us.

So, who can receive God's message? Or who can receive the Church's message? Only those who are ready to listen. Only those who are open to what God has to say them. Who realize that we are creatures, He is the Creator, that we are His children, He is our Father, that He is God and we are not.

It is interesting how Jesus described people. **"But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'"**

This generation? Jesus said it about people who live at the end of times and His words apply to people in our society as well. To what shall I compare this generation?

To children sitting at the marketplace and demanding then one, then another thing from their playmates. And they are never satisfied. The important thing for us to notice here is this word 'playmates'. Jesus illustrates that 'this generation' think that they can tell us like their playmates what we are supposed to teach and do.

That the Church has to listen to their demands. Do this! Do that! Why don't you do it this way? Why don't you do it that way? If you want my attention give me what I want!

See, this is nothing new. It was this way in Jesus time. It is the same way today. "This generation', those who are wise in their own eyes, just keep demanding like children from their playmates.

Unfortunately, today in our consumerism driven culture, where ‘customer is always right’, so many churches have assumed this mentality and try to please all the demands that ‘this generation’ as our customers put forward.

Don’t be judgmental, don’t talk about sin! OK. Don’t be annoying, stop preaching what we are supposed to do! OK. Be friendly, tell that basically all good people go to heaven, and it doesn’t matter what they believe! OK.

Be like culture around us, don’t be different, entertain us! OK. We can hear it even in our churches that we need to look up to our culture and to allow it to enlighten us. To enlighten ‘the light of the world’? This is so sad to see how people devalue the Gospel.

I’m sure we all have experienced that churches try to listen and obey whatever ‘children’ of ‘this generation’ demands. It is so sad. For, first, ‘this generation is not going to listen to God’s message anyway, whatever we do. They are already wise in their own eyes and they also want to teach God and the Church what to do.

Second, when we as the Church listen to these childish demands we abandon our responsibility and become like playmates for ‘this generation’. But we are not here to be like playmates.

The Father sent His Son Jesus Christ, and His Son sent us to deliver the same message. To deliver it not as playmate to playmate, but as loving parents to beloved children. We are God’s messengers. I believe that family analogy can be helpful.

When parents try to teach their children and demand them to do what is right thing to do, how well do children receive it? Don’t they argue and try to find a way to do what they want instead? ‘I don’t want to do this. Why can’t I do what I want?’

Parents have two choices, the teach their children patiently what is right, even if sometimes it may lead to conflicts, or neglect their responsibilities, as so many parents do these day, and just be playmates for their children. I’m sure most of us have seen the later happening and have seen where it leads.

The same way with the Church, with us. Our message is not ours, it comes from God the Father. We can’t change it or adjust it even if this generation accuses us as children sometimes do: “You don’t love me if you don’t do what I want!”

If fact we do, we do love this generation, that’s why we are here, that’s why we can’t change our message. And only those who understand that our message comes from God and with God’s authority will be able to receive it. Those who are already wise in their own eyes won’t listen to it.

There is not much we can change, we just need to remember that we are not sent to share our own, but God’s message. We need to do our best to make it as clear as

possible that we speak with God authority. We are not here to please ‘this generation’ but to reconcile them with God and bring them to eternal life.

Here we come to our second question, what is our message? First, let me ask, how would ‘this generation’, those who are still separated from Christ, how would they describe what is Church’s message? Morals? Rules? Commandments? ‘You shall’ and ‘you shall not’.

I believe this is how most of the people would characterize the Church. It is partly correct, but only partly. Here is the thing. Everyone knows that there is someone higher. Everyone knows that we are ultimately accountable before this Someone.

Our consciences remind of it all the time. We also know that we fall short, that we don’t live as we are supposed to live. For exactly in these occasions when we fail to do a right thing, our consciences accuse us.

As the result we perceive this Someone higher as a judge. He wrote these laws on our hearts, He holds us responsible, He is the ultimate Judge. This is how people naturally think about God.

That’s why they think that Church’s message is basically about ‘you shall’ and ‘you shall not.’ And as no one wants to be reminded of our shortcomings and to have extra guilt, people tend to avoid the Church. ‘I know these rules anyway...’

This is such an unfortunate misunderstanding. Sure, God wrote His laws on our hearts. Sure we break them all the time. Sure, our consciences correctly tell us that God is angry with our actions, or sometimes lack of actions.

But, this is not God’s message to fallen humanity. The Father didn’t send His Son to tell about His attitude towards our sinful lives. We know already that we deserve His anger, even if this knowledge is somewhat obscured. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to reveal His attitude *to us*. His *attitude to us*! To us and not to our broken lives.

Our conscience tell about God’s attitude to our lives, but we can’t know what God’s attitude *towards us* unless God reveals it to us. **“All things have been handed over to me by my Father... no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”**

These verses again affirm the clear message of the New Testament. Only in Jesus God attitude to us is revealed. We can’t learn it anywhere else. As Jesus Himself said ‘He is the way and the truth and the life.’

And this is how Jesus reveals the Father’s attitude towards you. **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** Come to me all and I will give you *rest*. This is our message. To tell everyone what God’s attitude *to us*, to every human being is. Come to me and I will give you rest!

This is what God the Father desires for us. He wants to give us what we need the most, rest, true rest in His presence. Yes, but someone may object, I can find rest whenever and wherever I want. I don't need God to give me rest.

They are so wrong and this is why. We need to understand what is this rest that God wants to give us. All people labour and are heavy laden. Sometimes it is just battling with difficulties in our lives, with brokenness around us, with injustice, with apathy, with evil, intrigues, trying to provide for and to protect our families.

Sometimes we toil trying to achieve something, to prove that we are somebody, to gain some respect, sometimes we work hard trying to secure our future, our health, our wellbeing, sometimes we strive so hard to find joy and meaning in our lives.

When Jesus says 'come to me and I'll give you rest' it is not only about taking a short break for an hour on Sunday morning. This is much, much more. It is the rest when you are reminded, who you are and how much you are loved.

This is how Jesus gives us rest. When we come to Him, He reminds us that we all are created in God's own image. That we, each of you are infinitely precious in God's eyes. Yes, you! That God the Father tells you, - you are my beloved child!

He knows your name. He knows everything about you. And knowing even the deepest thoughts of your hearts He says: 'I love you, I love you so much! I give my life so that you can live.' He says it to each of you.

When we hear these words, they give us true rest. Then you know that you are so important to someone whose opinion counts the most, to your Creator and Redeemer. That you are unconditionally accepted and loved. Not because you deserve it, but contrary to what you deserve.

When you come to Jesus, when you come to meet Him in the Divine Service, He speaks to you words of comfort, - 'be at peace, you are forgiven'. Come and I'll give you rest.

This is our message. Everyone needs to hear it. For there is no true rest unless you receive it from your God. Unless your life is filled with God's unconditional love. Everyone needs this rest. They just don't know.

Many think they are wiser than God. Others believe that our message is only about 'you shall' and 'you shall not'. But they all need to know how much God the Father and Jesus Christ love them and how much they want to give them.

Take this message with you and keep it close to your heart. Whenever there is heavy burdens, for you or for someone else, whenever our brokenness and brokenness of this world makes us to seek for a refuge, remember these words: 'Come to me, and I will give you rest.' He is always waiting for us. For you. Amen.