

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. <sup>26</sup> Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

<sup>27</sup> “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” <sup>1</sup>

### Smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader

“Are you smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader?” That was a question Jeff Foxworthy asked America years ago. Apparently the show has made a comeback. While the question and answer are still the same, the host isn’t. Now it’s WWE wrestling superstar John Cena who is asking the questions now and yet answer to, “Are you smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader?” remains the same. People aren’t that smart. Sad isn’t it. I remember 5<sup>th</sup> grade vaguely as an awkward time that I wanted to forget. That was the year the teacher found out I couldn’t see the board and so I got glasses. I wasn’t that smart, still didn’t know my states and capitals, but that didn’t matter much. What matters is that the show is back and the kids appear to be smart and the adults seem to struggle.

Jesus and his disciples seem to struggle as well. After preparing his disciples, going on mission, and seeing the results of their work. One may be disappointed but Jesus rejoices. It’s true, not everyone believes the message that the Christ has come. And yet the invitation still stands but we can’t expect anyone to answer correctly without the host feeding the answer. This is the foolishness of God that is revealed not to 5<sup>th</sup> graders but to infants and yet is hidden from the wise and intelligent. This gift that God gives, this rest from our labors is the faith revealed to us by God.

This is what God has given to you. But we tend to make faith/salvation more complicated than it really is. We like to find work where there is none and want to do something to contribute to our salvation. But Jesus gives rest, rest for life, rest for those who are weary and burdened by sin and suffering. You don’t have to be smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader to realize God has forgiven every sin and provided rest.

These words from Jesus come right after He had declared His condemnation upon the cities where He had been performing many miracles. It looks like his mission to the Galileans has failed. And these were cities populated by the descendants of Israel, those to whom God had revealed his plan of salvation through the prophets for so many years. They should have known better. They should have recognized the Christ when he came to them fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy and doing what they never could do.

But they were blinded by pride and ignorance. They thought they had sin taken care of. Do something wrong? Offer a sacrifice. It was part of their sinful nature that said they could get right with God through some effort of their own. But no matter how hard they might study, no matter how much they might know about God, it will do them no good unless Jesus reveals the Father to them. God is hidden. He can’t be found and yet he is everywhere. He reveals himself in his Word. There he reveals why he has come and what he will accomplish. But they weren’t even looking for Jesus.

They weren’t expecting a Savior and maybe that’s because they thought they didn’t need saving. So when Jesus came preaching and teaching, pointing out the full extent of the law, it hurt. Jesus said, “*If anyone looks lustfully at another woman, he has committed adultery. If anyone hates his brother, he has murdered him in his heart.*” Jesus wanted them to feel the full weight of the law so they could understand along with the apostle Paul, “*There is nothing good in me, what a*

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Mt 11:25–30). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

*wretched man that I am, who will rescue me from this body of death?"* Some were driven to that point and yet the Pharisee still pilled on more laws, more regulations, more work in order to get right with God. It was more than they could bear.

We don't usually think of God as hiding or his word as hidden. Scripture tell us that *God wants all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.* God wants to be known. We have here Jesus trying to make himself known by sending out his disciples. How is God hidden? You can't know God apart from him revealing himself to you. That means you shouldn't expect a private personal revelation other than the one given in his word. God comes to us through means. The Bible, his word, and Sacrament.

Now if I were to bring you up front and sit you before the altar and ask you these questions you might squirm, "What are the means of grace?" That's what we do with confirmation students. That's what we do with those who are little older than 5<sup>th</sup> Graders. Adults? We're allowed to forget. We won't ever use that. Jesus said, "This was *hidden from the wise and intelligent,*" therefore we have to make sure we fit neither of the descriptions. Give up on the study of scripture. Forget the truths that God has revealed to you. Ignorance is a quick way to become enslaved again, enslaved to the law which makes constant demands. The sad truth is that it doesn't matter how close to the church you are over the years – the word doesn't work via osmosis. It works through repeated application of rest in his word and if you think you're smart and that it is by your own doing then you're theologically stuck on stupid.

You're right to think, "It just doesn't make sense that God would send his son to save sinners." The logical thought of our day is, "You can save yourself if you work hard enough. That there is nothing we do in order to be saved, so we set out looking for something we can do. There is a tendency for us to take rest and turn it into another law. We may even focus on the words, "*Come to me,*" and "*Take my yoke,*" rather than the promise and the one giving us that promise, "*I will give you rest.*" Rather than the rest that Jesus offers and the invitation he extends to all, we're left looking for six steps to a better life, lost weight, better looking children, and money management. That's more to do. Not rest. The very definition of rest is to cease working. Do nothing. But we're good at working.

We're so interested in doing something to earn our salvation we'll even look at the little children and try to find something in them to imitate. But, "*Little children,*" doesn't refer to 5<sup>th</sup> graders, their knowledge, their humility, their ability to help, but a little child also known as an infant who can only fill his diaper and expect mom or dad to change it.

The point that Jesus was trying to make was "There isn't anything you do, this is all a gift from God, *He brings rest. Learn that He is gentle and humble in heart.*" We are helpless as infants, (not even a 5<sup>th</sup> grader) and admit that we can do nothing for ourselves, that Christ is revealed. Only by those who cry out in need, are Jesus' words of comfort and care rightly received. Jesus speaks to those who are heavy laden with loads they are unable to carry or clean up. To those who realize their weariness and burdened state, Jesus says today, "*Come to me and I will give you rest.*"

I understand it, but it makes no sense. Why would God give his most precious son for sinners? This is what Paul calls the foolishness of God. Forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life through faith alone does not compute with our sinful nature, so many reject it because grace doesn't make sense. *And yet it pleased God the Father to reveal this plan to those whom He would save.*

Only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son knows the Father. Jesus could make no higher claim of equality with God, of actually being God, than to say this: That He and the Father alone fully know and understand one another. Coming from a mere man, this would have been not only arrogant, but blasphemous. But not from Jesus, the god-man who came down into this world to suffer and die for the sins of sinners. It doesn't make sense.

Not even a 5<sup>th</sup> grader could come up with this. The world does not know God, but Jesus does, and only through Jesus can we truly know God and understand Him. In Jesus, God is made known. Through the Word, the Holy Spirit continues to make Him known, so that the Father's love for the Son is passed along to us.

The rest he provides is rest for your souls. It's not just our souls that find peace. The word refers not only to the spiritual but for the center of life. We find rest in this world. We don't have to labor tirelessly when we have forgiveness now. We don't have to do anything. We look with faith to the Son of God who clung to the cross for us. And we go to that cross. We cling to our salvation.

And that is what connects us to Christ. Our baptism binds us to his life and death. In baptism God yokes himself to us. A yoke served to bind together two animals. Usually you want the animals to be of the same pulling power but Jesus binds himself to us and drags our dead weight. Jesus binds himself not to the strong but to the needy, the left behind, the forgotten, the weary and heavy laden. Our burdens are no longer difficult and lonely, but joyful. Jesus has done it all for you and your salvation. His burden is our privilege. This rest is not earned but freely given by God who describes himself as *Gentle and Humble*, not harsh and violent. This gentle and humble God invites us to his table to eat his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Find rest. Rest means, "Don't do anything." Salvation is found not in our doing but in his doing. *But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)* Stop trying to earn the law. Stop trying to save yourself and realize it's already been done. Simply receive the salvation that God offers you through his Son because if it were by works, we could never be sure, we would despair of ourselves. And then rejoice because you've been set free and your life can now reflect the life you've been given. But don't think, "There is something I must do."

You're smarter than that of course it wasn't something you came up with either. That was something God revealed to you in his Word. And there is a simple answer to your salvation. It's so easy that even an infant can say it but the wise of this world can figure it out: Jesus. It's the ultimate confirmation answer. And he tells you to stop, rest, cease. The struggle is over and you can rest secure. Amen.