

## Re-Creational Righteousness (The Easy Yoke Part 2)

Matthew 11:28-12:14

#17 in our series Jesus Stories

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### Prayer

Lord God, take our lives and let them be ever only all for the. I pray that you Lord God, through the power of your Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord would speak through us, to us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

This week's sermon is really a continuation of last week's sermon.

[Image of two oxen bearing a yoke side by side]

Matthew 11:28

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," says Jesus.*

*"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."*

Last week we preached that His yoke must be His Cross.

[Image of Jesus carrying the cross]

And I wore this cross at the start of the sermon. (Peter gestures to the crossbar leaning on the railing next to him.)

- And we asked, "How could a cross be an *easy* yoke and a *light* burden?"
- And we noticed that Love makes yokes easy and burdens light.  
But, you can't surrender to love and be animated by love if you're stuck on your self.
- And then we noticed that crosses are designed to kill selves.

We pondered what it would mean to pick up a cross in Jesus' day and realized that a man who had picked up a cross would know that he had already been judged, so there would be no point in trying to judge himself and justify himself. He would know he had been judged and that day he would die...on a tree.

Well, we preached that when Jesus says, "*take up your cross daily*," "*take my yoke upon you and learn from me*," it's like He's offering to help us die, or maybe, realize we're already dead.

At the benediction, I read [2 Corinthians 5:14-15]

*"For the love of Christ controls us."*

(It controls us like Music controls dancers in a dance as if Jesus pipes, and like little children, we all dance.)

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, (They'd, like, lose themselves, no longer live for themselves) but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

And then I shared about a vision that a friend had during a worship service. People that received God's Word were suddenly crucified on crosses right there in the sanctuary. And then Jesus danced around taking people down off of their crosses. But some people wouldn't let Him.

Well, if a person refuses to come down from a cross, wouldn't it mean:

- They're not quite dead,
- Or at least refuse to admit that they're dead?
- In other words, they're still trying to save themselves and won't lose themselves.
- They're still trying to judge themselves, sanctify themselves, save themselves and create themselves.
- They're still trying to justify themselves, therefore, they can't lose themselves and find themselves dancing with Jesus.

Well, people like that remind me of myself and my self reminds me of this person:

Clip from *Warm Bodies*

[A zombie looking guy is continuously walking, as if he's seeking, searching for something with the following commentary going on in his mind.]

R: *I wish I could introduce myself. I don't remember my name any more. I mean, I think it started with an R but that's all I have left. I can't remember my name, or my parents, or my job, although my hoodie would suggest I was unemployed. This is a typical day for me; I shuffle around occasionally bumping into people, unable to apologize or say much of anything. I don't want to be this way. I'm lonely, I'm lost, I'm literally lost. I've never been in this part of the airport before. I wonder if these guys are lost too—wandering around but never really getting anywhere. Do they feel trapped? Do they want more than this?*

R: *This is my best friend.* [R sits down next to another zombie type figure. The two of them look at each other and grunt.] *By best friend, I mean we occasionally grunt and stare awkwardly at each other. We even have almost conversations sometimes. [The awkward staring and grunting continues for a prolonged amount of time.] Days pass this way.*

R: *What am I doing with my life? I'm so pale. I should get out more. I should eat better. My posture is terrible. I should stand up straighter. People would respect me more if I stood up straighter. What's wrong with me? I just want to connect. Why can't I connect with people? Oh, right, it's because I'm dead. I shouldn't be so hard on myself. I mean, we're all dead.* [R walks pass several other zombie type figures.] *This girl is dead. That guy is dead. That guy in the corner is definitely dead. Jesus these guys look awful.*

See? Maybe that's our problem: we're dead. *"Dead in our trespasses and sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh."*

That clip is from the movie, *Warm Bodies*. R is one of the walking dead. He's a zombie. And there's one other problem with zombies: They can't dream – because they can't sleep. They are restless – desperately looking for rest, heavy laden with their own dead flesh.

Mathew 11:28-30 and 12:1-2

*Come to me, all who labor 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.” “At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”*

Sabbath is the Hebrew noun, *Shabbath* from the Hebrew verb, *Shawbath*, which basically means “stop.” Exodus 31: 13 *“Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths.”* Above all YOU shall stop! It's really quite a bizarre commandment, if you stop and think about it: “Above all you are to be very diligent about doing nothing.”

It's the fourth commandment of the Big Ten.

- Exodus 20:8-11 Every seventh day, every *shabath*, because,

*“In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day and made it holy.”*

So, “remember the Sabbath because I – not you—created you.”

- In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, God gives a different reason for the Sabbath. He says,

*Observe the Sabbath, to keep it holy, (different), ... you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.”*

So, “remember the Sabbath because I—not you—delivered you.” Saved you.

- In Exodus 31: 12-17, the Lord says through Moses,

*Above all you shall keep my Sabbath for this is a sign . . . that you may know that I the LORD, sanctify you . . . keep the Sabbath . . . as a covenant forever.*  
(An eternal covenant.)

So, “Remember the Sabbath because I—not you—sanctify you. I justify you. That means I make you righteous.”

Observing the Sabbath is about remembering that God has created you, delivered you and sanctifies you. He rests, for He has given you rest. If you believe it you'll rest. He rests and so you must test...or die.

Exodus 31:12,14,

*Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths. ..(The Day of Atonement was the ultimate Sabbath. Keep the Sabbath.) Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done but on the seventh day is a ("Sabbath of Sabbathing), holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.*

Any work and you die!!

Well, naturally, we want to know, "what constitutes work?" Pumping blood from your heart to your body – is that work? Isn't life work?

Scripture defines work in just three places:

Exodus 16 Gathering manna - constitutes work

Exodus 35 Handling fire - constitutes work.

Jeremiah 17 Carrying a burden outside the home is work.

Well, we want to know –

"What constitutes my home? And "What is light enough *to not* be a burden? Pastor, could you get more practical and clearer? Make it clear how much I should give. How long I must pray. Give me more knowledge of the good – so I can be good."

The Pharisees did exactly what we all want done. They clarified the law so that they could rest as God rested. The Mishrah was this law about the law. It set forward thirty-nine tasks forbidden on the Sabbath. For instance, you could write one letter, but not two, for the Mishrah defined a burden as enough ink two letters.

A journey was defined as a certain distance from home, and a home defined as the place you ate. So, in Jesus' day, if someone needed to take a trip, they'd stash food along the way at intervals equaling a Sabbath day's journey. – Then on the Sabbath they would stop at each stash, eat the food, declare that place home, and continue on their way.

You see, they worked extremely hard, at not working.

Bill Maher clip

[ Bill Maher is talking to a Jewish rabbi about the Sabbath and various gadgets that have been created to help the Jews keep the Sabbath ]

Bill Maher: *I've always wondered about keeping the Sabbath holy. I've always wondered if it came about because God rested on the Sabbath, and that's why man has to.*

Rabbi: *That's right. That was the creation of the seventh day, that there should be rest. There are thirty-nine types of specific actions that cannot be done on the Sabbath. One of them is lighting a fire, then planting, plowing, tying a knot, untying a knot, one is building, one is destroying something as to build.*

Bill Maher: *So much more Kosher is to develop these gadgets that figure out a way around it.*

Rabbi: *That's right.*

Bill Maher: *OK..um...*

[The rabbi then begins to show Bill Maher the various gadgets including an elevator type gadget.]

Bill Maher: *Let me guess; you can't push a button on the Sabbath. How do you get someone to put this in their building if they're not completely nuts?*

Rabbi: *Well actually that really doesn't make any difference.*

Bill Maher: *Hmmm.*

Now it's easy to laugh, but Bill Maher is laughing at you too.

The Pharisees worked extremely hard at not working, for God said, "Rest or die."

And Christians work extremely hard at grace, for God said, "Faith in Grace or die." And so we come up with all sorts of rules to make that practically applicable so that we can rest.

"You have Faith in Grace if – you give 10% at church and share your faith on the bus."

"You have faith by Grace if you adequately understand faith by Grace."

In other words, you trust Grace, if you don't trust Grace, but your knowledge of Grace, if you trust yourself and call it grace. In other words: You rest if you work really hard at resting.

You know, I think I'm an awful lot like the Pharisees. I was so stressed about preaching on rest, I couldn't sleep: "Rest or die!" That's the law and Jesus said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law." So, "Rest or die."

So, right now, on this Sabbath – I command you to rest. Let's see who can rest best – even fall asleep first, GO!

Psalm 46 *"Be still and know that I'm God, says the Lord."*

Psalm 127 *"The Lord gives to His beloved sleep. . ."*

Mathew 8 *"Jesus fell asleep in the boat in the storm."*

"Rest or die. Rest or die!"

That's kind of restful, isn't it? What a commandment!

- The harder you try to obey – the more you disobey.
- The harder you work at not working – the more you work.
- The harder you try to rest – the less you do.
- You can't stop you with you – *Shabbath*

And *Shabbath* is what we all want.

We all want rest.

We all want to be finished, created, delivered and sanctified.

We all want to be justified.

We all want to live in the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation.

Where everything and everyone is good, where we are the perfected image of God, at peace with God, in the bliss of *Shalom*. It is exactly what every son of Adam and daughter of Eve most desperately desires. But, the moment you turn it into a law that we must fulfill, to justify ourselves – we die, or maybe we realize we're already dead. The law is an impossible yoke and an unbearable burden.

Mathew 11:30 – 12:1-6

. . . *"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat*

*nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here."*

You know these are very frustrating verses for a guy like me, cause I want to know, "what is good and what is evil" so I can apply the word to my self and justify myself and I'm still not sure if Jesus is saying disciples picking grain on the Sabbath or priests sacrificing lambs on the Sabbath is good or evil.

It's almost like Jesus is saying: "Because I'm here it's good and it's the Sabbath. Something greater than the temple is here, is present."

Jesus said He is a temple, even our home, and our temple. He is the Lamb that is sacrificed and even the priest that offers the sacrifice. He's the son of David and root of David. He's even the Bread of the Presence – the Presence

In Leviticus, the priests were commanded to put twelve loaves of bread on a table in the temple, to be replaced every Sabbath. There were to be two piles of six. Six symbolizes man, and on the 6<sup>th</sup> day – two piles, like Man torn in two. It was said to be a covenant forever. No one knew what that meant. But, it was called "the bread of the Presence," literally, "The bread of the face." Like, if you've seen this, you've seen God and you know God.

And remember Jesus took bread and broke it saying, "My Body broken and my Blood shed is a covenant forever?"

Matthew 12:6-8:

*I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."*

See what I mean: walking, talking Sabbath?

In verse 7 Jesus quotes Hosea the prophet: "*I desire mercy,*" *Hesed* in Hebrew. It means Covenant Love – it means Grace. "I desire Love." You know the law describes Love, but Jesus is the Presence of Love and Sacrifice of Love. God is Love and Jesus is God in flesh, body broken and blood shed.

Mathew 11: 8-11.

*"... the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" – so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?"*

You see? If the man loves the sheep, it doesn't matter how much the sheep weighs, the sheep is not a heavy burden. Love makes yokes easy and burdens light. [Peter sings] "He ain't heavy; he's my brother."

Mathew 11: 11-13:

*He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."*

The Pharisees seemed to know about the good, but were incapable of doing good.

We seem to have knowledge of the good, but can't actually do the good.

In fact, we're offended by the good and would like to hang him on our tree of knowledge.

*Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.*

So Jesus heals this man and doesn't consider it (or him) to be a burden. It's like He creates him, saves him and sanctifies him; the man is finished and so can rest.

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, as if all He rules and all He does is Sabbath.

As if His work is rest. His work is rest and all of our rest is work, work, work.

In Romans 14:5 Rabbi Paul writes:

*One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. . . just live to the Lord."*

Galatians 4:9

*Now that you have come to know God or be known by God, how can you now turn back to the weak and elementary principles (or spirits) of the world, whose slave you want to be once more? You observe days and myths and seasons and years! I'm afraid I may have labored in vain."*

In Colossians 2:16 He writes, *"Let no one pass judgment on you concerning food and drink . . . or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."*

So when Christ came – the Sabbath came. You see, it's like wherever Christ is – the Sabbath is – so Sabbath isn't simply a day of the week. Sabbath is a mode of existence, like living in rest is moving in rest, like dancing a dance in which obedience is freedom and work is rest.

In Hebrews 4 we read:

*"His works were finished from the foundation of the world." For he has somewhere spoken at the 7<sup>th</sup> day in this way, "and God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day from all His works." . . . So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for "whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His." "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest."*

Well, what is that rest? Where is that rest? And when is that rest?

Does God still rest? For if we believe God has no rest, how could we enter His rest?

Soren Kierkegaard wrote:

*“The greatest danger for a child is not that his teacher be an unbeliever, but that his teacher be pious and God-fearing and that the child, seeing this, would never the less notice that deep within there be a terrible unrest. The danger is that the child would draw the conclusion that God is not infinite Love.*

I think there is a “terrible unrest” deep within modern day “Evangelical Christianity.” And that is the belief that God has no rest; that eternally and forever without end, God is relentlessly angry with some of the children that He has made, for He tortures them endlessly in a place we call hell. And even more, we are responsible for that anger and therefore, responsible for God’s rest. So, it’s our job to give our Creator rest, and that’s pretty dang unrestful!

Well, what is God’s rest?

For if God can’t rest, we can’t enter His rest.

Genesis 1:31, 2: 1-3

*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

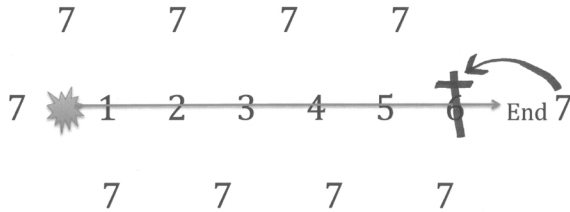
There can be no torture chambers on the seventh day, for “everything is good,” and His “work is finished,” it is finished.

Now, Hebrews just told us that his work was finished “from the foundation of the world,” which means day seven happened on Day one or before day one. Day seven is not like the other days. Unlike the other days of creation, the seventh day has no evening and morning, like no beginning and end.

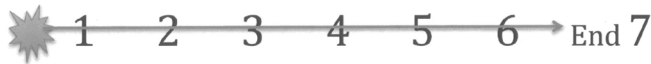
- Zechariah 14:7 refers to it as a “*unique day*” that has “*no day and no night.*”
- In the Revelation, at the seventh seal, seventh thunder; seventh trumpet, which includes the seventh bowl, the Angel (that looks just like Jesus) swears out loud that “*time (chronological time—chronos) shall be no more, for the mystery of God is fulfilled.*”
- Paul makes it clear that we have come to the “*end of the ages in Christ.*” Christ, who was crucified at the 6th hour on the 6th day of the week, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation as He cried, “*It is finished*” and made atonement.

I’m trying to say that the 7<sup>th</sup> day is eternal. The 7<sup>th</sup> day is the Kingdom of Heaven and the 7<sup>th</sup> day is at hand.





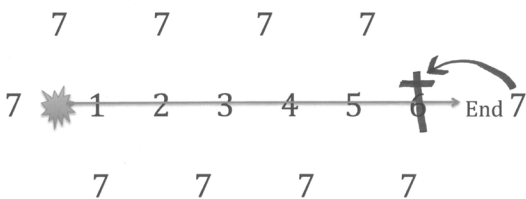
And we get to the 7<sup>th</sup> day through Jesus, who is “the way” and “the door,” the Word of our Creator, who creates us, saves us, and sanctifies us by Grace through Faith. Jesus is the Substance of the Sabbath in our 6<sup>th</sup> day world.



I’ve shown you this diagram many times. I don’t think it describes a week long ago. And I don’t think Genesis chapter one describes a week long ago. Genesis 1 is a description of all time – the days of time.

Physicists now argue that if the universe is fifteen billion years old from the standpoint of our planet, it would be about six days old from the standpoint of the big bang. And it doesn’t matter whether you buy the physics of Special Relativity or not, the Bible has said it all along: Humanity–Adam is created in the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Adam is still being created. You are still being created.

However, Jesus is called “The first born of all creation,” “The first born from the dead,” “The ultimate Adam,” “Perfect image of the Invisible God.” So no one was finished until Jesus cried, “*It is finished*” as He hung on the tree where we are created, saved, and sanctified in Him, we are finished in Him.



If you’ve been here a while, you’ve seen this slide a lot. I’m saying that Jesus is the Presence of the 7<sup>th</sup> day in our 6<sup>th</sup> day world.

Jesus came to give us eternal life; a 7<sup>th</sup> day heart in a 6<sup>th</sup> day body.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law in us.

Jesus is the Love of God in us, Eternal life in us.

Jesus is our Sabbath rest.

In Mathew 12:13 He heals the crippled man on the Sabbath and in verse 14 – the Pharisees conspire against him, how to destroy him. They want to be right – but can’t make themselves

right. They want to love – and so they try to take Love. They want to rest and can't find rest. So, in the name of rest, they crucify the Lord of Rest. They crucify the Lord of the Sabbath.

Trying to justify themselves, they crucify the One who justifies us all. Trying to rest, they crucify Rest on the tree. We all took His life on the tree, and yet He gave His life on the tree “and where sin increased grace abounded all the more.” And so He transformed that tree of knowledge into the tree of life.

You see, Love is not a thing, like a list or a set of laws that you can take and simply apply to your life. Love, (real love) is God and God applies you to the Life by giving you Himself and then justifying you with Himself.

In that movie, Warm Bodies, R wanders around all day judging himself, trying to justify himself:

*“What am I doing with my life – I’m so pale. I should get out more. I should eat better. My posture is terrible. I should stand up straighter. People would respect me more if I stood up straighter. What’s wrong with me? I just want to connect. Why can’t I connect with people? Oh yeah, it’s because I’m dead.”*

God said to the Adam: *“The day you eat of the tree you will surely die.”* So when Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He immediately began to judge himself, trying to justify himself. What’s wrong with me? I should love, but I don’t love. I think I just crucified love. I just want to connect. Why can’t I connect? Oh yeah – we’re dead. Our soul is dead. Our psyche is dead.”

See? Maybe we can’t rest in the 7<sup>th</sup> day until we admit we’re dead on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. I can’t find myself, until I lose myself, but how can I lose myself with myself?

R can’t lose himself – He can’t stop thinking about himself. He can’t rest and he can’t dream. He can’t make himself right or stop trying to make himself right until someone else makes him right.

The trailer for *Warm Bodies*

R is walking and says, *“What am I doing with my life – I just want to connect. Why can’t I connect with people? Oh yeah, it’s because I’m dead.”* The scene changes, R is being pursued by people with weapons. He’s shown fighting and struggling. A girl fires a gun at R and he is smitten with her. A close up of eyes is shown and we see his heart inside of his chest beginning to beat. The girl’s ammunition runs out. R approaches her, reaches out, and touches her face. He then motions to her that she should keep quiet. They are at an airport and R tells this girl to pretend that she is dead so that she can remain safe. The girl and he spend a bit of time together and she asks: *“What are you?”*

Another individual is shown. He says, *“This is a corpse infected with the plague. It is uncaring, unfeeling...”* (Simultaneously, multiple scenes of R expressing fun, caring, feeling and more are shown.) The girl says, “I don’t understand but he’s changing. He feels, and he’s learning to be human again.” Another individual tells R that he has started something, and whatever he and the girl have has infected the other zombies. The girl tells her father that the zombies are curing themselves. Her father swiftly tells her: *“The are not curing themselves.”* (Several more action scenes of the couple together overcoming obstacles are shown interspersed with the words: LOVE MAKES US HUMAN.)

“Love makes us human” – that’s pretty good theology. It means we can’t make ourselves love, but Love can make us, ourselves. Actually when the zombies begin to love, they begin to sleep and begin to dream, they dream of what life really is and who they truly are.

Maybe whenever you love you’re dreaming of who you really are and dreaming of your home in the 7<sup>th</sup> day. But, you see...

We don’t create Rest – Rest creates us.

We don’t create Love – Love creates us.

God is Love and Jesus is the substance of the Sabbath.

Your Rest is in Him or Him in you.

Actually Love invades the zombies when R kills Julie’s boyfriend, Perry and eats his “body broken and blood shed.” Actually he eats his brains. So, R has the mind of Perry, like you have the mind of Christ. Well R begins to love, as Perry had loved, which means He begins to see that he was dead, which means he feels remorse, which means he confesses and Julie forgives. He took love like fruit from a tree and that’s sin. But love forgave the Love, and that’s Grace, and Grace is Life, like seed planted in soil.

Well, in the presence of love – R learns to love. He loves. And others begin to love in the presence of his love. The zombies love and become who they truly are: human – the image of God.

Now listen to our text

Mathew 11:28-29

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden...*

If you don’t come, maybe you aren’t “heavy laden,” and God will make you heavy laden. The law came to increase the trespass and make you heavy laden.)

*and I will give you rest...*

You can’t earn rest, achieve rest or make rest. Someone has to give you rest. You can’t make yourself right. Someone has to make you right. You can’t justify yourself. You must be justified.

*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.*

His yoke is a cross and he said, “Take it up daily.” So, what does that mean?

I’ve been asking that question a lot because I labor and often feel heavy laden, and I need rest for my soul – my psyche. You know I have this job – I’m a pastor. That means people expect me to have “the knowledge of good and evil. People expect me to know what’s right and do what’s right. They expect me to be “righteous” and I expect me to be “righteous.” So, I spend a lot of time judging myself, which means trying to justify myself, which means trying to make myself right, so that I can rest. But, I can’t rest: I spend all the time wandering around bumping into people, “shoulding on myself”: I should get out more. I should eat better. I should have called. I should not have called. I should’ve been more blunt. I should’ve been more subtle. I

should work less, but I should do this and do that. I can't stop and I can't connect. What's wrong with me?

Well, if I took up a cross, the way a person in Jesus' day took up a cross, I would know that I had been judged. So, there would be no point in justifying myself or even judging myself.

Remember what Saint Paul wrote?

*"With me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by your or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. . . It's the Lord who judges me."*

You know, whenever we judge ourselves, aren't we judging love in ourselves, as if Love were a thing we had created and could judge?

We can't judge Love or create Love, but Love creates us and judges us. In fact, maybe that me, that judges me and is so stuck on me, is the very thing that needs to be judged and condemned, that me, that judges love and so, won't surrender to love. The Lord is Love.

Well, if I picked up a cross, I would be surrendering my judgment to God's judgment, the judgment of Love. I would give up on justifying myself in the past and surrender my hope of justifying myself in the future. I would stop worrying about what I had done and what I had said and whether I was right or wrong. I would stop worrying about what I will do and what I will say and whether I'll be right or wrong. I'd stop worrying if I had loved, or would love as if I were the judge of love.

I'd surrender my past and my future and carry only an infinitely small burden called now. Yet, now is the only place I can know Love. Now is the only place I can know persons. Love is a person that's with me NOW. God is Love and Love justifies me NOW. Love makes me right tight NOW.

So, when you "labor and are heavy laden," and you can't "find rest for your psyche – your soul," picture yourself crucified with Christ and let that self, that can't rest die. You can't justify yourself, but Love will justify you Now. Love creates you, saves you and sanctifies you now, presently in the present with the Presence.

Pick up a cross, watch yourself die and then listen to Love. He is a presence with you NOW. Say, "Love what do we want to do?" and do that. Look around – at the people next to you – your neighbors, look in the mirror – you could be the least of these that must be loved. Look around and ask, "Love, what do we want to do?" And that will be right, and that will be the revelation of the right. That will be the revelation of you – the eternal you. That will be the new creation.

That's how children enter the Kingdom of God ahead of Pharisees, pastors and professors. They lose themselves in Love, like they lose themselves in a dance. The Piper pipes and they just dance. They don't try to love to make themselves right. They are right because love has made them dance.

The dance is right. The dance is rest. It's the new creation – I think that's where we get the word re-creation, or recreation. It's work that's done from rest. Maybe all of Jesus' work was done from rest: healing lame men, blessing little children. Even carrying his cross, he seems to have considered an "easy yoke and light burden" for the love of you. And He didn't do any of it to make himself righteous. He did all of it because He is righteous. And when He makes us righteous, all our work becomes re-creation – I think that's recreation.

Maybe there is no righteousness but recreational, *RE*-creational righteousness.  
That is: You do right not to make yourself righteous.  
You do right because you are righteous.

In the words of Paul: *"You do good works, which God prepared beforehand that you should walk in them,"* step by step, *"that you should walk in them."*

I once read about a university professor invited to speak at a military base.  
Upon arrival, he met Ralph. Ralph had been sent to meet him at the airport. As they walked down the concourse, Ralph kept disappearing. Once to help an older woman whose suitcase had fallen open. Once to lift two toddlers up to where they could see Santa Claus. And again to give directions to someone who was lost. Each time he came back with a big smile on his face.  
"Where did you learn to do that?" the professor asked.  
"Do what?" Ralph said.  
"Where did you learn to live like that?"  
"Oh," Ralph said, "during the war, I guess."

Then he told the professor about his tour of duty in Vietnam, about how it was his job to clear minefields, and how he watched his friends blow up before his eyes, one after another.  
"I learned to live between steps," he said. "I never knew whether the next one would be my last, so I learned to get everything I could out of the moment between when I picked up my foot and when I put it down again. Every step I took was a whole new world (like a whole new creation) and I guess I've just been that way ever since."

Seems to me that Ralph picked up his cross, died to himself, lived in the now, and there met Love, and Love made him righteous.

Let's do that now.

### **Communion**

On the night love was betrayed, He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you; take and eat. And in the same manner, after supper, having given thanks He said this is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you. Do it in remembrance of me. Eat and drink. See? I think this is the bread of the presence. He's present, and He wants you to be present. So let's talk to Him.

### **Prayer**

I'll say something and I'd like you to say something like this in your heart.  
"I surrender myself to your judgment. (A long pause) And I want you to be *my* judgment. I want you to be my love. Now live in this place in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The cup and the bread are both the love of God and the will of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Let's worship!

[Several worship songs are sung.]

### **Benediction**

So He says, *"Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Take up your cross and follow me daily."* Now if you're thinking to yourself: "But what happens if He's the new life

but I crucify Him, the good Him. What if I pick up my cross and the Man of Love gets crucified? Well, do you understand, Love can't die?

So, what happens at the cross? Scripture says that we are saved in the circumcision of Christ. That's a wild picture! But our old, dead flesh is cut away. What remains? The power of an indestructible life, that's what the book of Hebrews calls it: The Lord of Love—the new you—the very body of Christ. May you live free, constantly sacrificing that old self, living in the now with Jesus, who is your new self. Live free in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*