Vacations are great, aren't they? If you are still a student, you just have to love your summer vacation. If you are working, you must look forward to any time you can get away. A vacation is refreshing, relaxing, rejuvenating and restful.

Just as we need rest for our bodies, we also need rest for our souls. Whether we realize it or not, our souls are hard at work every day. Our souls work hard to fight off temptation, to stay on the narrow road to heaven and to live according to God's will. Our souls need rest. Today, Jesus gives us tips to **FIND REST FOR OUR SOULS**. Think like a child and take a load off.

First, find rest for your soul by thinking like a child. Do you remember your thought-process as a child? Life was great, wasn't it? All you thought about was eating, sleeping and playing - just like being on vacation. Sometimes you asked really big questions like, *Why is the sky blue?* and *Why is daddy's hair turning white?* When someone gave you an answer, you believed it and moved on. Life was easy.

As we get older, life gets harder because we think that we are so smart. As we get older, we do not accept answers from other people as easily. We do not want other people telling us what to think. We want to figure everything out for ourselves.

We are confident in ourselves, aren't we? We want to proudly display our certificates, diplomas, degrees and awards. The same is also true of spiritual knowledge. We declare ourselves spiritually wise because we went to Lutheran schools or Sunday School, we were confirmed or we have been life-long members of this church. Then we rely on our spiritual education to get us into heaven. Not only does such thinking make our souls tired, it also sends them to hell.

Jesus condemns those who rely on their own wisdom or knowledge to get to heaven. He says: *I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned.* Many of the Jews, Pharisees and people of Jesus' time considered selves wise and learned. They thought that they knew how to get to heaven. They thought it was because they were God's people, they studied God's Word and they kept God's laws. Yet, Jesus said that the truth was hidden from them. Even with all of their knowledge, they still did not know or believe that he was the promised Messiah, their Savior. Because they did not know Jesus, Jesus condemned them.

If we consider ourselves wise and learned, Jesus will condemn us too. It does not matter how many certificates, degrees, diplomas or awards we have; it does not matter how high we score on an IQ test; it does not matter how smart others think we are. If we rely on our own wisdom and knowledge, the truth will be hidden from us. Even if we think we are safe because of our spiritual knowledge, our thinking's all wrong.

In fact, the harder we try to find the truth on our own, the more tired we will get. Jesus tells us that not even the smartest, sinful human being can find the truth on his own. **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.** There is only one way to find the truth and that way is through Jesus. Only Jesus can give us the wisdom and
knowledge we need to get to heaven.

Jesus chooses to reveal the truth about his Father and how to get to heaven to those who think like a child. **I praise you, Father, because you have revealed [these things] to little children.** Again, remember how a child thinks.

First, children do not worry about anything. They eat, sleep and play like they are always on vacation. Jesus does not want us to worry about anything either. Granted, we do have responsibilities, but his Father has promised to take care of all of our needs. We do not have to worry about what we will eat, what we will drink or what we will wear. Just as he cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, he will care for us. So we will work hard in school and get the education we need to do our work on this earth, but such things won’t consume our lives. Instead, we will have time to enjoy the blessings our Father has given us.

Second, children ask a lot of questions. Since we do not have to worry about the problems of life on earth, we can ask more important questions about life eternal. Also remember that when children ask questions, they readily believe the answer. Jesus wants us to admit that we do not have all of the answers to this life or the next. He wants us to ask him for the answers. He wants to tell us about his Father’s love for us. He wants to tell us how his Father has cared for all of our needs - earthly and spiritual. He wants to show us how he lived and died for us so that we can spend all eternity with him. And when he tells us, he simply wants us to trust him like a child. Then we will have rest for our souls.

After we have begun to find rest for our souls by thinking like a child, we can find even more rest for our souls by taking a load off.

We need to take a load off because our souls should be tired. We might be tired for one of two reasons. Some of us are tired because we continue to carry around the load of our sin. There is only one reason we would carry around the load of our sin - unbelief. We do not take Jesus at his Word. He has declared to us that he died on the cross to take away our sins. He is promised to remember our sins no more and to separate them from us **as far as the east is from the west.** But we do not believe him. We think that our sins are too many or too great; we refuse to believe that the Father loves us. Either that or we do not want Jesus’ help. We are still trying to think for ourselves and deal with sin on our own. That only means we continue to carry it.

We might also be tired from fighting the spiritual battle. Even after we believe Jesus’ offer of forgiveness, the devil, the world and our sinful flesh never stop trying to heap sin back upon our shoulders. The more we cling to Jesus, the harder they work to tear us away. They constantly tempt us to worry about life’s problems or to deal with things on our own. They tell us that God should not, would not and could not possibly love us. Even when we resist, the battle wears us down. It is hard work to fight off evil.

Jesus offers rest by taking the load off of us. **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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.** Jesus already took the load off of us. He carried the load of our sin to Calvary’s cross. If you have ever gone hiking or camping, you know what it is like to carry a load. I think of the packs that our soldiers carry – at least 60 lbs - a lot more for some. At this point in my life, I would have a hard time lugging that around. I would have to have someone help me with it, to carry my load.

We struggle and cannot carry the load of our sin. It does not matter how hard or
long we try, we cannot suffer enough for our sins. Jesus took the load on himself, not just for one or two people but for the entire world. He put the cross on his shoulders and carried up the hill. On the cross he put our sins on his soul and carried them to hell. We do not have to bear the load of our sin because Jesus carried for us.

Jesus also took the load off of us by teaching us his Father's love and will. Earlier Jesus declared that his Father, the L of heaven and earth, handed all things over to him. Now Jesus tells us that he uses his power for us in gentleness and humility. Jesus used his power to prove his Father's love by coming to live and die for us. He used his almighty strength to rise from the dead and prove that his Father accepted his work on our behalf. He used his authority to send out others who would tell us all he and the Father had done to bring us home to heaven.

While we wait for Jesus to take us home to heaven, Jesus gives us his load. At first, we might not think we want any load. Why would we want to exchange one for another? But Jesus tells us: My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Jesus' load consists of love, mercy, forgiveness and strength. It contains the truth of his and his Father's love for us. It includes every promise that he has already kept and every promise he'll ever keep.

We need Jesus' load for this life. Until we get to heaven, we must still battle evil, but we do not have to fight this spiritual battle alone. We do not need to tire and weary our souls by trying to accomplish the impossible. Rather we can take a load off and rely on Jesus. He promises to give us his strength for the battle and to carry us when necessary. He promises rest for our souls.

There is nothing more restful than a vacation. As children of God we can eat, sleep and enjoy our lives on this earth trusting that our heavenly Father will care for all of our needs. We can turn to Jesus and know that he has the answer to all of our questions. He has already taken the load of our sin off of us and in its place given us the load of his forgiveness, mercy and peace. We trust that Jesus will continue to give rest to our souls until he takes us on eternal vacation. Amen!

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