

Matthew 11:25-30, "LESS THAN SUCCESS." (Pentecost 7A) '20

Dear LORD, we can so easily become tired & broken-hearted. Show us Your way out of the problems we get ourselves into (OR) of those that are caused by others. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

My brothers & sisters in Christ,

There's a neatly painted sign on the cinder block wall of a church's parking lot (WHICH) reads: "Don't climb the wall!" Did you ever feel *LIKE* climbing the wall? Because you've had "one of those days"?...OR weeks?...OR months?...OR years? You know WHAT I mean -- WHEN you just think you have one crisis *MASTERED* maybe NOT - a *crisis* either; just a *conflict*, PERHAPS)-- an *annoyance* WHEN another is (standing) [there] [in line] to take its place --to the point WHEN you feel you can NEVER get ahead. at times, in fact, you're convinced that in WHATEVER the area --- you are NEVER going TO SUCCEED.

SOMETIMES it can be quite serious & quite frustrating, IF NOT downright *crushing*.

WHEN it's your career, for example, that's involved. And that does happen -- the classic "midlife crisis" in WHICH everything seems (to have reached) a standstill, a plateau & you are left to look at yourself *HONESTLY* -- aging -- & ask, "Is this it?" "Is this my life?" That's IF you're lucky & WHAT you face is) *ONLY* a plateau, NOT an outright reversal in WHICH your professional life -- WHAT you've worked for ALL these years -- proves to be: "LESS THAN A SUCCESS."

In business it can be bad; in terms of health it can be worse. WHEN the symptoms show up & THEN the diagnosis & THEN the prognosis, SOMETIMES frightfully grim: dietary restrictions, 'new' medications with possible side effects & prolonged, painful treatments. Have you had "one of *THOSE* days" -- & more?

Personal relationships is another area in WHICH we often achieve "LESS THAN SUCCESS" with reference to a spouse that *hurts* OR children that does too OR parents so does *THAT*.

And THEN, of course, there's the matter of fatigue WHICH hinders ALL of our actions.

Are you a wife working outside the home returning to find a "second shift" of housework awaiting you?

Are you a husband adding overtime OR an online course to your busy schedule?

Are you the parent of a newborn WHO won't let you *sleep*?

Are you a single parent stretched in so many directions that you SOMETIMES feel you can't manage?

Do you sit in the dark waiting for your teenagers to come home?

Have you *spent* yourself into some serious debt?

Do problems with the neighbors give you insomnia?

Fatigue wears us down & makes us feel: "LESS THAN A SUCCESS."

1.) Experienced by Christ. Does it help (to know) that [at this point] in His career, Jesus didn't seem to be *SUCCEEDING* either? There were a few modest achievements. Jesus listed them there in Matthew 11 -- almost, it seems, as much *to assure* Himself as anyone else: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (v.5) But it wasn't ALL that rosy. NO sooner were the 12 disciples sent out on their mission ALL of them -- rookies at this point than John the Baptist (the one real professional on our LORD's team) was thrown into prison. That must have been quite a blow. And THEN, as you read on [in Matthew 11], the cities WHERE Jesus was doing "most of His miracles" in

Galilee: "Capernaum," "Korazin" & "Bethsaida" were the places WHERE He was meeting the most opposition & making the least headway. (vs.20-24) And NOW, as IF that weren't bad enough, even John the Baptist the old pro was beginning (to have) his doubts & to say so out loud: "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (v.3)

Did you ever have "one of those days"?...OR weeks?...OR months...OR years?

IF it *helps* at ALL & it's *supposed* to, it is: "At *THAT* time Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened...and I will give you rest.'" (vs.25,28) Matthew tells us that the LORD WHO invites us to "come" is the One WHO *UNDERSTANDS*, WHO can *SYMPATHIZE* with situations & circumstances that are "LESS THAN SUCCESS" because He has been there.

And more than *SYMPATHIZE*. For Jesus goes on, "Take My yoke upon you." (v.29) Do you know WHAT that *means*? That defines a relationship, for the common "yoke" in Jesus' day was a "yoke" for 2, an implement (by WHICH) 2 oxen for example could *SHARE* the load -- & THUS *BEAR* the load that might have been too hard for 1 to endure -- alone. "Take My yoke upon you," the Savior says (v.29) & so saying He offers *TO SHARE* our burdens...even the burdens of disappointment, reversal & every cruel variety of human sorrow, sickness & pain.

And we know Jesus means it -- that this *SHARING* will spell "rest for our souls," because we've seen the kind of Burden-Bearer He --*IS*. (v.28)

For He *IS* the One WHO kept on *WORKING* for us, even in the face of "one of those days" -- 1 little incident at a tim], 1 obstacle after another, 1 advance, 1 rejection, 1 argument, 1 act of compassion.

He kept on *WORKING* even on "one of those days": "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (v.5)

He kept on *WORKING* even on "one of those days" WHEN He was under the weight of the cross & the burdens of the whole world's sin, guilt & failures -- including our own, destined to find "rest" ONLY in the dark crypt of a hastily borrowed grave. NOT apparently "A SUCCESS" until Easter & His victorious resurrection.

A young man in Caribou County, British Columbia was accused of setting a forest fire. Alone in a police interrogation room shortly after his arrest, he fell to his knees, raised his hands & prayed, "O GOD, please let me get away with it." His plea was picked up by a police officer monitoring the room with a closed-circuit camera & a hidden microphone. The defense lawyer argued that such evidence was NOT admissible, but an appeals court judge said the law protects privileged communication ONLY with a human being, NOT with GOD.

Well, that might be a tricky legal question, but it is a simple one -- theologically. IF we believe in Jesus, we *ALWAYS* "get away with it." "There is now no condemnation," St. Paul says, "for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom.8:1) Of course, GOD wants us to be honest & accept the blame for our misdeeds & IF there are civil penalties, we accept those, too. But being *punished* by GOD is something else. That would be hell on earth & for ALL eternity. And that's WHAT we escape completely, because Jesus *SUCCESSFULLY* paid ALL our penalties on Calvary.

2.) Overcome with God's help. And WHAT made it a SUCCESS was -- a relationship, the relationship that existed between "the Father" & "Son," just as Jesus spoke of it here -- a trusting relationship in WHICH the Son of GOD was willing to settle for "LESS THAN SUCCESS" in order to faithfully do "all things...committed to Him by His Father," including (being) "weary and burdened" for *THAT* was needed to be done. (Mt.11:27,28) And Jesus trusted that His heavenly Father would

make it ALL work out. SUCCESS would be *His* Father's to confer, but...at *His* time & in *His* own way. Because "Father" & "Son" were in this thing -- together.

And that's the secret to living triumphantly with "LESS THAN SUCCESS" to know that we don't have TO SUCCEED on our own, for He WHO already has triumphed over sin, death & Satan for us -- doesn't call you OR me to shoulder the whole load [by ourselves. "Take My yoke," says the One WHO is "gentle and humble in heart," WHO for our sake endured "LESS THAN SUCCESS" to make the "yoke...easy," "the burden...light." (v.30) "Come to Me, all you who are weary." (v.28) "Come" even WHEN the results seem to be "LESS THAN SUCCESS" -- so that we may continue to work & to help others -- NOT to give up -- either on GOD OR on our Christian responsibility to carry on, "yoked" as part of that "Father-Son" relationship, as a child of GOD.

Jesus does call us "little children" here -- "infants," actually -- & says that kids have a way of knowing the "hidden things" -- our dependence [on others]. (v.25)

Ask a small child, for example, to make you a peanut butter & jelly sandwich & the results will probably be "LESS THAN A SUCCESS," right?...certainly NOT the product of a 5 star restaurant. Does the child get down about such failures? sad? frustrated? discouraged? It could happen. I mean, for a 4 year old a peanut butter & jelly sandwich would be an insurmountable obstacle OR attempted, a complete disaster. Unless, of course, you offer to help.

"Come to Me," says the One WHO has also had "one of those days"...& weeks...& months...& years, "Come, I can help you." (v.28)

"If the world withholds from you -- its silver and its gold, And you have to get along with meager fare, Just remember in My Word, How I feed the little bird -- Bring your burden to Me...and leave it there.

If your body suffers pain and your health -- you can't regain, And your soul is almost sinking in despair, I know the pain you feel, I can save and I can heal -- Bring your burden to Me...and leave it there.

When your youthful days are gone, And old age is stealing on, And your body bends beneath the weight of care, I will never leave you then, I'll go with you to the end -- Bring your burden to Me...and leave it there." The hymn: "Leave It There," modified.

"And...you will find rest for your souls." (v.29) AMEN.