

Sunday 5th July 2026: Trinity 5. Benefice BCP Holy Communion, Stonegrave.

“Who will rescue me from this body of death?” asks St Paul in our Epistle. He is speaking of that struggle we know so well: the struggle with the selfish self, the sin that pulls us away from God, leaves us bereft of true life, and ends in decline and death. But in the Gospel Jesus assures us it doesn’t have to end there. He says, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

These words of Jesus have brought comfort and peace to countless people for two thousand years. I use them when ministering to the sick and the dying, and when anointing people for peace. They speak directly to a soul in pain and bring hope.

We all need that rest for our souls, more than we realise. Thomas Moore, in his best-selling book *‘Care of the Soul’*, wrote that “the greatest malady of our time” is “loss of soul”. ‘When the soul is neglected’, he said, ‘it shows itself in obsessions, addictions, violence, and loss of meaning’.

Jung described the soul as *“the living core of human meaning”*. We only need to look around at a world that seems to have no meaning, that the world still neglects its soul. Mobile phones, social media, and all the things that arrive in the name of progress have not solved this. Jung also said that “people will do anything, no matter how absurd, to avoid facing their own souls.” When we avoid the soul, everything else is affected: our relationships, our

health, our well-being, our sense of purpose. However good life may look on the outside, something within begins to decay. The burdens grow heavy, the weariness becomes deep, and we begin to live lives of quiet desperation, emptiness and loneliness, what St Paul refers to as “this body of death.”

What can we do? Jesus gives us four simple steps: *come* to him, *take* his yoke, *learn* from him, and find *rest* for our souls - come, take, learn, rest. We cannot buy that rest. There is no pill for it. It is found through faith and above all, prayer, through relationship with Jesus, because we were created by God to live in loving relationship with Him and each other. As St Augustine said, “*our hearts (or souls) are restless until they find their rest in God.*”

But we can only receive this invitation when we accept know that we need it. If we think we are doing perfectly well without Jesus, His words will pass us by. So, the first step is simply to recognise our need and respond to His invitation to come to Him.

Once that happens, Jesus then says, take, His yoke. A yoke is a wooden crosspiece placed over two animals so that they pull together as a team. The yoke Jesus offers is not meant to crush us. It is tailor-made for us, and it joins us to him. He wants to be yoked with us, to walk with us, to carry the weight with us. His yoke fits well, his burden is light, and as we take it up, we begin to find rest for our souls.

Next, Jesus says, learn from me. Rest for the soul is not the same as an idle mind. We learn from Jesus through worship, Scripture, prayer, daily devotion, and by following his example by being his disciple. He withdrew

to quiet places to listen to the Father. We too may need to put away distractions, step aside from the noise, and seek a quiet place to hear God's still, small voice where we can listen to Him and learn.

This daily invitation from Jesus can now become our daily mission, to be carried with us to offer when we meet someone weary and carrying a heavy burden. We see the evidence of weariness all around us: a world heavy laden, unsure where to turn for rest; a world neglecting its soul and distracting itself from life's burdens. Our world needs this invitation from Jesus, and we all need it too. We need to know there is somewhere to turn when life becomes overwhelming.

Many people are desperate to hear this invitation, or to be reminded of it. There may be someone in your life who will not hear it unless they hear it through you. Or today it might be you who needs to hear. If that is the case, come to Jesus today in our Holy Communion in and in prayer and find rest for your soul. Then go in peace and share His invitation with all who long for rest.

Thanks be to God. Amen.