

May my words be spoken and heard in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus said, "come to me... and I will give you rest." These words have been playing over and over in my head like a broken record all week.

Every time I sat down to read today's Gospel, "come to me" would jump out and not go away. I found myself saying "what do you mean by "come to me" it can't be that simple? can it Lord?"

Then I found myself reflecting on the time I have just spent in New Zealand and on a moment that happened a few days after my Grandad had died.

I was at my parents house out in the wood shed chopping wood for the fire places, it was that cold over there that we needed to keep them going all day. Oddly enough its quite surprising how therapeutic it is to chop wood.

But as I was chopping through the pile of wood I started to get this overwhelming sense that I need to go and sit in the park and just be.

Now the park, as it is called, is a spot on my parent's property that has some big old trees that you can sit under and look out across the farm next door to the hills in the distance. It's a nice quiet spot where all you can hear are the birds singing to one another.

As I sat there I reflected on the experience of the last few days and gave thanks to God for the support and encouragement my Grandad had given me over the years. But most of all I found myself just sitting, being present and breathing in the fresh crisp New Zealand air and simply saying "here I am lord, thank you."

After about 20 minutes (despite my shoulders being a bit achy from wood chopping) I walked away feeling completely rested and at peace within myself, ready for what the coming days would bring.

I realize now that this was Christ inviting me and reminding me amongst the busyness of life, to come to him, to be present to him, and find rest.

I believe that when we hear Jesus saying "come to me" in today's Gospel, he is giving us an invitation to exactly do that. To come to him, to be present before him, and to surrender one's self into God's loving presence in order that we may find rest.

To know God is not about being either wise or intelligent. Nor do we need to be like a trained schooler to know God, and his love for us. Rather, Jesus declared that we just need to be a little child.

Jesus had come to know his father the way a son does: not just by studying books about him, but by living in his presence, listening for his voice. This is why throughout his ministry he spent time away in prayer, coming to God, surrendering to and resting in God's presence.

And we are to do the same. Through this invitation that Christ offers us, we are to come just as we are, and allow ourselves to hand all that weighs us down over to God and trust in him.

When we do, it is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of the strength of God in our lives. It allows us to see and trust in the spirit of God that dwells with in each of us. Jesus encourages us to come into and surrender to God's love.

This invitation to come to Jesus and surrender into God's love is not an easy thing to do, as it is about making a commitment to listen, and journey with God through prayer into the heart. So that we may experience the greatest love of all, God's love, and where we can find rest from the busyness of life.

David Benner author of *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality*, says "love is our identity and our calling, for we are children of love. Created from love of love and for love, our existence makes no sense apart from divine love."

Coming to Jesus and surrendering ourselves to this divine love offers us the possibility of freedom from what makes us weary, freedom from all our burdens, and freedom to be still, to rest, and to genuinely love God and others as the Father loves us.

By surrendering we are being willing rather than being wilful. It is a readiness to trust that is based in love, it is relaxing and letting go, it is floating in the river that is God's love.

And it is this love that is portrayed in the incarnation, the life of Christ and his death and resurrection that we as Christians are called to represent to the world at all times in every aspect and activity of our daily living.

I believe if we intentionally make time in prayer to be still and listen to Jesus' words "come to me...and I will give you rest" we journey with Christ into the heart, into that sacred place, where we find a river that will take us to the God who desires intimacy with us.

When we come and be present to Christ, allowing ourselves to experience this love and rest in it, we cannot help but be transformed. Allowing us to love one another just as Christ loved us, and filling our hearts with love for those to whom he sends us to.

Come to me, Jesus says, and find life giving rest.

The Lord be with you