

Introduction:

- Some have spoken about living in the 'rat race.' *"Just when I start winning the 'rat race' the rats got bigger."* 1 Sam 6:4-11, the Philistines speak of rats and tumors that came into their land when they captured the Ark of the Covenant. Rats and tumors are not good things! So being in a rat race cannot be good either. Here is what Jesus had to say about striving, working, laboring hard:
- *"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."* (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV)
- Did you know that the word stress comes from a Latin word that means to be drawn tight? Is anybody here uptight about anything? How many times do you hear someone ask, "how are you doing" and they answer, "I'm all stressed out."
- 30 some years ago Time Magazine ran an article on "Stress, The Epidemic of the 80's." Now we have cell phones, computers, iPods, iPads, etc. and we are stressed more than ever. Seven out of ten people feel stressed at some point during a typical work day. 80% of workers feel stress on the job. 40% of all job turnovers are due to stress. A large percentage of all visits to the doctor's office stem from stress. 34% of workers report difficulty in sleeping because they are too stressed out. Doctors now know that stress is one of the leading causes of the two #1 killers in America, heart disease and cancer. If you don't get rid of it, it can lead to migraine headaches, high blood pressure, chest pains, ulcers, heart burn and many other things. The rats are getting bigger!

I. Identifying Rats

- IE. There are several types of rats. Black rats, brown rats, sewer rats, roof rats, gray rats, and creepy hairless rats. Rats are known carry disease when left to themselves. They get fleas and the fleas spread disease. There are different types of rats and each type can be identified by different characteristics.
- B. Some types of rats that cause stress:
 1. Busyness – a fast moving rat. IE. Typically found hurriedly moving through life. They create stress and are mostly associated with rat races. They keep you moving when you know you should be resting. They keep you working after hours and weekends. They make you feel guilty for resting.
 2. Guilt rats – they create stress by bringing guilt into ones life. *"My guilt overwhelms me– it is a burden too heavy to bear."* (Psalm 38:4, NLT) Guilt because of sin. False guilt because of unmet expectations, letting others down, not making the grade. Jesus is a master of guilt removal.
 3. Grief rats – we cant always prevent this one. All creation groans because of what it encounters. We grieve over our own actions as well as the actions of others. *"Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also."* (Psalm 31:9, ESV) Is 61:1-3 says He gives us beauty for ashes, joy for sadness.
 4. Grudge rats – How we handle our resentments against those who hurt us will determine if we turn out bitter or better. We can't hold on to offenses. There is truth to the phrase, "It's eating me up."—because it is.

5. Indecisive rats – every decision has consequences. That’s why making decisions is so stressful. We’re afraid of making the wrong decision, or we haven’t made a decision because we’re unsure of the outcome. When we can’t decide, James says we are ‘unstable’ meaning that we stagger around. *“Your road led through the sea, your pathway through the mighty waters– a pathway no one knew was there!”* (Psalm 77:19, NLT)
6. Weary rats – same routine. Insanity, doing the same thing over and over expecting different results. Just plain tired. Weariness causes stress.
7. Jesus gives us three things in Mt 11:28-30 that can help terminate rats.

II. Come To Jesus

- A. *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* In Jesus day people had the same stress as us but the added stress of trying to follow God. The Jews had ‘reduced’ the 10 commands to 613 laws. Jesus’ response was, “COME TO ME!” I.e. And we are not talking about a “Come to Jesus moment.” Like one of my coaches use to say.
 1. He is our rest and if you need rest come to Him. He does not invite us to more activity or more programs. He does not give us more to do to find rest. He invites us to himself. This really flows well with the messages on Zoe! He is THE LIFE! Where life is flowing there is rest!
 2. The rest that Jesus offers is not just the stopping of activity it is the coming into His presence.
- B. Four powerful ‘come to me’ scriptures:
 1. *“I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it.”* (Luke 6:47, NLT)
 2. *“Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* (John 6:35, NLT)
 3. *“On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!”* (John 7:37, NLT)
 4. *““I am leaving you with a gift–peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* (John 14:27, NLT)
- C. We come to Him in faith and we come in surrender. Do not worry was what He taught in the sermon on the mount.

III. Take His Yoke

- A. To take means to pick up and carry. Like coming to Jesus it involves a decision followed by action. Jesus said, “Come” and secondly Jesus says, “take.” In other words having come to Jesus there is something that He would like us to receive...His yoke.
- B. The Greek word for zygos is yoke. But I discovered something else about this word. In the septuagint it also is translated ‘scales’ as in weighing something or to measure weight. The Black Horse of revelation has scales in his hand. Yokes in the OT were mostly about tyranny and bondage. Jesus uses this play of words...my yoke is one that you will want and that will be good and pleasurable for you.

1. Yoke - to be yoked is to be subject to another. Jesus invites us to be yoked to Him. Three things involved with that. To be yoked meant:
 - a) Connection - to be yoked is to be connected to. *“Take my yoke”* - establish a connection with me. To get access to the life of God, Zoe you have to have a connection with The Life! This is not a one time thing that we do it connecting and staying connected.
 - b) Direction - follow me is the invitation. When you are yoked, you go where you are lead. Being yoked to Jesus affects where we go in life and how we go in life. But know this...it will be good!
 - c) Cooperation - means that we are to work with Him not against him. Requires a surrendered and consecrated will.
2. He is gentle and humble big difference. Big difference between darkness and light. Tyranny and freedom.

IV. Learn From Jesus

- A. This is the way of discipleship. Learning how the Kingdom operates. He wants us blessed - empowered for success, prosperity, fruitfulness and longevity.
 1. The christian life is about relationship not rules. Healthy relationships make life light.
 2. The christian life is about binding ourselves to Jesus, who loves us and wants the best for us.
 3. We can learn from someone when we do those two things. The Zondervan Commentary notes, *“As complicated as life may become, discipleship at heart simply means walking with Jesus in the real world and having him teach us moment by moment how to live life his way.”*
- B. In the old days when one would plow with oxen you always put the young ox with the older ox because the old ox knew his way around the field. In 1 cor 11:1 Paul said follow me as I follow Christ. He was yoke to Jesus therefore He could say that.
- C. If we will come to Jesus, take His yoke, and learn from Him...

V. And You Will Find Rest

- A. *“Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”* (Isaiah 40:28-31, NLT)