

What a SOUL NEEDS

We know a lot about how to care for our bodies. Our diet and exercise habits are well-informed. But what about our souls? Most problems are soul problems. Your soul is your deepest you—and God loves your deepest you. How do we take care of our souls? We need to nourish our inner lives and become people whose hearts, minds, wills and bodies are integrated and whole. This summer, we look to the middle chapters of Matthew to discover what the soul needs to find health and peace—resting in the hands of a God who loves us.

RESURRECTION FAITH • Matthew 12:38-42 • Tim McConnell • August 13, 2017

As the series ends, we've talked a lot about what a soul needs. We know how to care for our bodies; what to eat, how much sleep to get, how much exercise. We employ experts to keep our systems running and install new parts. Every time someone gets a new knee I joke that we are one step closer to becoming a fully bionic church! Hopefully we've learned how to care a little better for the deepest part of us, our souls. But of all the things we talked about nothing connected quite as well as week six, A Soul Needs Rest. Napfit! Some members got so excited about it they printed up t-shirts for the staff! I guess we've got a lot of sleepy souls around here. The soul just needs a nap sometimes!

So that sermon was about Sabbath—taking Sunday for the Lord. We know we need it. Why don't we do it? There is one Psalm in the Bible that says it is for the Sabbath day—Psalm 92. "It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High, proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord; I sing for joy at what your hands have done" (v. 1-4) It is good—we know we need it—to take a day for the Lord, stop all else, humble ourselves and put God in his rightful place. So enough of knowing what's good; let's do what's good. Next week we begin a big challenge. The Ten Week Challenge. Can you give an hour of worship to the Lord every week for ten weeks? Can you do it? We are going to try all together, and to help you we are offering a Sunday night service right up to October 29th. We are putting First Things First starting right now. You will feel a different kind of rest and peace in your soul after you make this commitment. I hope you'll try.

But today we have business to do. For all the things the soul needs, there is one thing it needs above all. Your soul is your deepest you, your most enduring you. It's the part of you that goes on and on from here to eternity. Now, it's my job today, I take it as my task, to ensure that no one in this room, not one of you, leaves this place until you know that your soul rests in the hands of Jesus Christ for all eternity. Take care of your body. Exercise it, massage it, nap it, adjust it, replace parts, fight off disease—with blessing and mercy it may last you 80 or 90 years. Your body isn't worried about lasting forever. Your soul is. Your soul knows it goes on forever from here. And when your body is finished and your soul goes on, where will your soul belong? Forever? I'm not pulling any punches here today, friends. If your soul is not in the

hands of the loving Savior Jesus Christ, your soul is in eternal jeopardy. In the course of the next minutes, I'm going to do my level best to convince you that you need to express faith in Jesus Christ, today, right now. At the end of this message we will have ministers up front to pray with you and we will have an extended moment of prayer where you can commit your life to Jesus Christ forever. I know and believe that today is the day of salvation for many—that the Holy Spirit of God is going to visit some of you today, and you will leave here knowing that your soul, from now on and forever, belongs to Jesus Christ.

What's happening in our passage today is that Jesus is pointing out a division. Not a false division, like the false division of racism we saw tear Charlottesville apart yesterday. A division that threatens to be eternal, between those who see and believe who he is, what he is doing, and those who don't. The doubters want to make Jesus prove it to them—give us a sign. Make the stars move. Make fire come out of your fingers. Whatever. Of all Jesus has done, they are not willing to be convinced until he does a little dance just for them. No. The life and ministry of Jesus is already sign enough—God has revealed more than enough information for faith. The problem isn't external, it isn't a lack of information or a lack of participation from God. It's internal—an unwillingness to see and believe what Jesus has already shown. But, Jesus says, you will see something. Let's call it "the sign of Jonah."

Jonah was a reluctant prophet sent by God to preach to a city called Nineveh—current day Mosul, Iraq. Jonah didn't care for those people and frankly didn't want them to know God. When he did go and proclaim the reality of God, the whole city repented and believed in God. They were saved, which actually made Jonah upset. Nice to see honest people in the Bible, but Jonah could have had more compassion on his enemies. But he's famous for getting thrown out of a boat and swallowed by a whale. Three days under the sea; three days swallowed by a great fish, then re-emerging to a fresh start in life. Jesus says this is what you'll see. We know he is referring to his death and resurrection. Jesus goes under the earth, swallowed by death itself, but then on the third day Jesus rose from the dead proving that he and he alone has the authority, the ability, the power to keep a soul safe through life, through death, and into eternal life. That's the sign. And that's what your soul needs—faith in Jesus. Resurrection faith. But there's a division. Even though all this will happen, says Jesus, you folks

aren't going to get over yourselves, so stop doubting and start believing. The Ninevites are going to stand up and call you fools. The Queen of the South (that's the Queen of Sheba, the Ethiopian Queen who came to visit Solomon and hear about God) will call you guys fools. You had all this knowledge. You had all this revelation of God. You had the scriptures and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus! Still you did not believe. Look, at some point you have enough information. It's time to decide. Are you with Jesus or are you against him? Your soul knows your body isn't going to last. Your soul needs to know what happens next. Your soul needs resurrection faith.

For me it came when I was only twelve, in 1987 at a Young Life camp for middle schoolers called Oakbridge. It was way out in California and I was one of the youngest campers there. Camp was full of fun, games and adventures. There was a 100-foot slip and slide made out of plastic tarps and lathered with dish soap to make it more slippery. I almost died on that. Every night we gathered, sang, and talked about God. The speaker made clear to me that God didn't do all that God did just for Himself, or even just for the crowd. Jesus was waiting to hear from me, and my soul hung in the balance for eternity. There was a division. I needed to know what side I would be on forever. He made it clear to me that God loved me, wanted a relationship with me, and sent his Son Jesus to die for me on the cross, because it was my sin, my rebellious spirit, my unholiness that was keeping me from a relationship with my loving and holy God. God didn't just want to call me a sinner and send me away. He wanted to diagnose what was broken in our relationship so I could come home. So God sent Jesus. Jesus died to pay the consequences I couldn't afford. Now all I need do is say thank you to Jesus, put my faith in His name, give Him my soul and begin to walk into eternal life with Him.

For me it was intellectual. I needed the facts and pieces of God's plan of salvation. I knew very well that there was a God. Listen, I don't think you grow up here in Colorado Springs looking at how these mountains are painted every day and say, "Yeah, I think it's all just chaos plus time." Not even the scientists believe that. God is there – I knew it already. But that didn't mean I knew how to live with God. I needed the facts found in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

It was intellectual. It was also emotional. The speaker talked about how Jesus died for my sins. He said God loved me so much He allowed his Son to go and die

on the cross for my sins, to rescue me. And if I was the only little boy on earth, God's love for me would be so strong that He would still send Jesus to die on my behalf. I had thought before about how soldiers, police, or firefighters sometimes die for others. They die for others; they die for us. But for God to send His Son to die for *me*. That felt different. In my time as an Army Chaplain I buried three Soldiers. I knew each one. I had prescreened every Soldier before they deployed. It was my responsibility to ask about their spiritual readiness for war. You can imagine those conversations varied widely. They ranged from "I'm great, Chaplain. Just sign my form" to long conversations about faith – one that led to a baptism. It's different to say three soldiers died in Iraq and to know them and bury them, and hug their families. It was emotional to think of Jesus suffering for my sake; dying on the cross because a sacrifice was necessary to clean up my mistakes. Jesus made a sacrifice for me I could never make on my own.

It was intellectual, it was emotional, and it was spiritual. I knew my soul hung in the balance. This is God's plan of salvation, God's way. Was I going to trust Jesus with my soul that day or not? It was a spiritual question. Why did God find my soul so valuable? Who else would I trust with my soul? Should I try to keep it myself? I don't know how to keep an eternal soul. I don't know how to make it live life to the fullest. I don't know how to navigate death with my soul. I gave it to Jesus. I declared my soul a possession of Jesus Christ. I answered with faith. He answered with the flood of his Holy Spirit. My heart filled, my internal spirit filled, my mind went aflame, my emotions were overwhelming, and my spiritual life came alive like never before. I realized just how much my soul needed an answer, my soul needed resurrection faith.

In Ann Voskamp's new book, *The Broken Way*, she said her daughter asked her how long people live. Oh, pretty long. "No, how many days?" They kind of calculated average life expectancy and came up with 25,550 days. "What does that look like?" her daughter asked. So they calculated a little more and figured out it looked like about four cups of grain. They put four cups of grains of wheat in a mason jar and looked at it. Ann said, "But you're already eight, so we need to scoop some out." Her daughter said, "And you're forty." Let's not talk about that! Anyway, there it is. The Psalm says "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12) We take care of our bodies, but you know there's an expiration date stamped on them. Somewhere is a clock counting down, somewhere a jar

of grain, and we don't know how many days are allotted. Your soul needs resurrection faith. Jesus came, Jesus died, Jesus rose again and there is a division—looking at the very same life of Jesus people break out into two groups. Looking at the very same events they see two different realities. Where are you?

Let there be no more division and doubt. Let today be the day of salvation, the day you remember forever when your soul rested in the hands of Jesus, in the power of His resurrection. Let this be the hour of commitment. No more division. Romans 10:12 says, "For there is no difference...the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Now it is before you. You have enough information, enough data. Don't be like the unfaithful ones demanding more and more signs. Enough. Jesus is here. Now is the time. As we move into this time together, I want every individual soul to ask, "Where am I with Jesus? Who keeps my soul?" Maybe today is the day that you need to lay down your life before Jesus who laid down His life for you. I'm going to pray, and if you are ready to declare today that your soul belongs to Jesus then this prayer can be your prayer, your personal statement to Jesus that you believe. No one prays alone, so all of us who are able lift our voices together. Let's pray:

*"Lord,
No more division and doubt,
It is time for me to say to You,
Thank you for sending Your son Jesus to die for me,
Thank you that Jesus rose from the dead to bring eternal life,
Thank you for saving my soul from my own disobedient ways,
I give You my life,
I put my soul in Your hands,
From now on I follow You,
My Lord and My Savior.
Amen."*

STUDY GUIDE

"What a Soul Needs: Resurrection Faith" Matthew 12:38-42

Start It

- "In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." So John Wesley described his conversion to personal faith in Jesus Christ. There is a difference between knowing what God has done and placing your own soul in His hands in faith.

Study It

- Read Matthew 12:38-42. What do you think the Pharisees are asking of Jesus? Why does Jesus react so negatively to their request?
- Jesus refers to the harrowing experience of Jonah (Jonah 1-2) as the only sign the generation will be given. Does he mean Jonah's experience or His own coming experience? How are the two related? What do they have in common?
- Jesus says the Ninevites (Jonah) and the Queen of the South (1 Kings 10) will both attest to the current disbelievers that they had missed the obvious truth before them. Why do you think these groups of people were able to see what the Pharisees could not?
- What difference does it make what we think about Jesus' life, death and resurrection? What response is required to knowledge of these events?

Pray It

Lord, no more division and doubt, it is time for me to say to You, thank you for sending Your son Jesus to die for me. Thank you that Jesus rose from the dead to bring eternal life. Thank you for saving my soul from my own disobedient ways. I give You my life. I put my soul in Your hands. From now on I follow you, my Lord and my Savior. Amen.

Live It

Write the story of your salvation in three sections: before Christ, when I met Christ, and after Christ. Share this story with a loved one.