

Weekly Devotion

Lay Your Burdens Down! Find rest in Jesus over the summer.

Ex. 33:14 **The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”— Exodus 33:14**

Dear friends and family of True North and St. John’s,

It’s not the most common farewell in the English language, but it expresses a Christian’s wishes at parting just as well. You may have heard it more in movies or on television than in real life. When you say goodbye, “Go with God” may not be the first words on your lips. These words do, however, commend our loved ones to the presence of our gracious God until we see them again.

The LORD himself offered up that farewell to his prophet Moses. He told Moses to leave Mount Sinai after he had received the Law there. But this wasn’t the first time Moses left. The first time Moses came down the mountain, he found the people worshipping a golden calf. Moses became angry. It was so bad even the LORD said he would not go with them to the Promised Land. He said, “If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you.”

As summer comes near, many of us are leaving. We may not be departing Mt. Sinai, but we have the same Law Moses received from God written for us in the Bible. Although Moses had “finished school” multiple times now, he wasn’t done learning God’s Word. Neither are we, even though we have reached the end of another school year.

Israel wasn’t done learning, either. They had set up an idol as an image of the LORD, contrary to God’s command. Unlike Israel, we don’t bow down to golden calves in our worship of the Lord. We set up different idols. Instead of a cow, we make an idol of our jobs. We tell ourselves we can serve the LORD on Sunday morning just as well at work as we can at church. Or maybe our idol is time. With a busy summer schedule, we’ll get back to church when it’s convenient. There’s just too much to do now. The idol can be friends or family. We take good things God has put in our life—blessings from his hand—and use them in place of worship of God. We set up idols, not at the foot of Mt. Sinai, but in our own hearts. And we tell ourselves that we’re worshipping God the whole time. Like Israel, we need to go back to the mountain. We need to keep learning from God.

When Moses went back to the mountain, he interceded for the people. Although God’s anger burned against his people, Moses sought the favor of the LORD on behalf of his countrymen. He reminded God of the promises he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

These things serve as a picture for us, too. Moses interceded for the people, but they quickly abandoned the LORD again. Most of them died wandering in the wilderness. But we have a mediator greater than Moses. When we sin, Jesus Christ intercedes for us. He fulfilled the Law we have from Moses but couldn't keep. Jesus had no idols in his heart, but only the LORD his God. He ascended Mount Calvary, not to bring more laws for us to obey, but to bring us forgiveness for all our sins. He has brought us into God's rest by giving us his peace. He assures us he will never leave us or forsake us.

Before Moses descended the mountain, he saw God's glory as he proclaimed his name, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, who forgives our sin. Moses asked God to go with his people, and God promised to be with them. He shielded them from their enemies. He also brought his people into the rest of the Promised Land.

As summer approaches, a new set of temptations come our way. As some leave us for other places, our prayer is the same as Moses' prayer. We have God's promise that our prayer has been answered. Whether you are leaving or staying, whether you will return in the fall or move on to a new place in life, ask God to go with you. As you take leave of some friends, entrust them to the LORD. Also encourage them to go back to the mountain where Jesus earned us rest. Find rest in Jesus from all your work, and in all your farewells over the summer. And go with God! He will go with you.

The Lord's blessings throughout the summer and wherever you go!

In Christ,
Vicar Ewings

This devotion series is based upon Matthew 11:28-30 which says, ^{Mt 11:28} "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ^{Mt 11:29} 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. ^{Mt 11:30} For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."– Matthew 11:28-30