

Rest in Christ

The Roots of Restlessness

Lesson #3 for July 17, 2021

Scriptures: Matthew 10:34-39; 23:1-13; Luke 12:13-21; 22:14-30; Philippians 2:5-8; James 3:16.

1. Aspens are beautiful trees, reaching 45 to 90 feet (15 to 30 meters) in height. They thrive in cold climates with cool summers. Their wood is used in furniture and also for making matches and paper. Deer and other animals often feed on young aspen trees during hard winters, as their bark contains many nutrients. Aspens need lots of sunshine, and they grow all the time—even in winter, making them important winter food sources for different animals.

Aspens, however, are most notorious for the fact that they have one of the largest root systems in the plant world. The roots spread by underground suckers and form a colony that can spread relatively quickly, covering large areas. Individual aspen trees can live up to 150 years, but the larger organism [root system] below the ground can live for thousands of years.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, July 10.†

2. What kind of hidden characteristics are found in our lives that keep us from being fully committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are we fully aware of these problems?
3. We avoid conflicts whenever we can. We prefer harmony and peace. Conflict resolution seminars are held frequently in churches and other institutions to try to avoid such things.

Matthew 10:34-39: ³⁴ [Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; ³⁶your worst enemies will be the members of your own family.

³⁷ “Those who love their father or mother more than me are not fit to be my disciples; those who love their son or daughter more than me are not fit to be my disciples. ³⁸**Those who do not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be my disciples.** ³⁹Those who try to gain their own life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will gain it.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 10:34-39). New York: American Bible Society.†

4. Why would Someone who is called *Prince of Peace*, use those words?

Isaiah 9:6: A child is born to us!

A son is given to us!

And he will be our ruler.

He will be called, “Wonderful Counsellor”,

“Mighty God”, “Eternal Father”,

“**Prince of Peace**”.—*Good News Bible*.*†

5. Jesus could have come as a king, so powerful as to demand service and obedience from everyone on this earth. Instead, He arrived as a helpless Baby Boy! And yet, in His life He

constantly stirred up controversy. Why was that? The words above from Matthew 10 were spoken quite early in His Galilean ministry. Maybe Jesus should have come as a female!

6. What in the world did the disciples think when Jesus talked about a cross? Crosses certainly were the farthest thing from their thinking! So, what was Jesus's point? **He was really talking about priorities.** Was He referring to Micah 7:6?

Micah 7:6: In these times sons treat their fathers like fools, daughters oppose their mothers, and young women quarrel with their mothers-in-law; a person's enemies are the members of his own family.—*Good News Bible*.*

7. Remember that the fifth commandment requires us to honor our parents. How does that fit? Is it easy to turn from our natural loyalties to family members and make God first in our lives? That would be hard! Why did Jesus tell us to do that? Is the time coming when we have to make our allegiance to God top priority over every other allegiance? What did Jesus mean when He said that if we make those other priorities higher than God, then we are not worthy? How many turn from Christ to appease a relative? It must have seemed absolutely incredible to the disciples to choose a cross over their family! But, they did seem to want to follow Jesus—no matter where that led. They were hoping, of course, that it would lead them to be rulers in an earthly kingdom. How many of them would have followed Jesus if He had said that many of them would end up as martyrs? Would we?
8. So, what advice did Ellen White have for our young people today?

I have no higher wish than to see our youth imbued with that spirit of pure religion which will lead them to take up the cross and follow Jesus. Go forth, young disciples of Christ, controlled by principle, clad in the robes of purity and righteousness. Your Saviour will guide you into the position best suited to your talents and where you can be most useful.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 87.3.

9. Do we sometimes have to bear crosses that are not of our own choosing? What about those who have certain handicaps? Are there crosses that we choose to bear? Why is selfishness such a huge issue? Wasn't that the original sin in Lucifer? Even in heaven? When we exercise selfishness, we are following directly in the footsteps of Satan himself. And we find that usually selfishness is what leads us to commit other sins. Selfishness seems as natural as breathing!
10. What can we learn from Luke 12:13-21 about the problem of selfishness? Is it a sin to plan for our futures?

Luke 12:13-21: ¹³ A man in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide with me the property our father left us."

¹⁴ Jesus answered him, "My friend, who gave me the right to judge or to divide the property between you two?" ¹⁵And he went on to say to them all, "Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because a person's true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be."

¹⁶ Then Jesus told them this parable: "There was once a rich man who had land which bore good crops. ¹⁷He began to think to himself, 'I haven't anywhere to keep all my crops. What can I do?' ¹⁸This is what I will do,' he told himself; 'I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I will store my corn and all my other goods. ¹⁹Then I will say to myself, Lucky man! You have all the good things you need for many years. Take life easy, eat,

drink, and enjoy yourself!’ ²⁰But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?’ ”

²¹ And Jesus concluded, “**This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God’s sight.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

11. Why do you think this parable appears only in the Gospel written by Luke, a Gentile? Why do you suppose the other Gospel writers ignored this parable? Who do you think told Luke about this parable? Was selfishness a major problem among the church leaders in the days of Jesus and, later, when Luke was written? Now?
12. What would it mean to be rich in God’s sight? Those who were most blessed in the Old Testament were rich! How could a poor man like Jesus be blessed? How does selfishness affect our relationship with God? How does it affect our relationship with our spouses? Our families? Other people we know in the church? Our neighbors? And colleagues?

Philippians 2:5-8: ⁵The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶ He always had the nature of God,
but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.

⁷ Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had,
and took the nature of a servant.
He became like a human being
and appeared in human likeness.

⁸ He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

13. In the Roman world, crosses were for traitors! In the parable that Jesus quoted, it would have seemed that this rich man was in great shape. But, his ideas were directly contradicted by what we learn about Jesus Himself in Philippians 2:5-8.
14. Are we laying up treasure in heaven?

Matthew 6:20: “Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

15. Why are materialism, wealth, and “getting things” so attractive to us?
16. Have you clearly outlined in your mind the events that happened during the last week of Jesus’s life on this earth? Can you explain what happened on each day? The triumphal entry was on Sunday. Jesus met some very serious challenges, especially on Tuesday of that final week. And then, on Thursday evening as they were preparing to celebrate the Passover and even on their way to celebrating the Passover, the disciples were arguing among themselves about who was to be greatest! Why was this an issue at that moment?

Luke 22:14-30: ¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table with the apostles. ¹⁵He said to them, “I have wanted so much to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer! ¹⁶For I tell you, I will never eat it until it is given its full meaning in the Kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ Then Jesus took a cup, gave thanks to God, and said, “Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸I tell you that from now on I will not drink this wine until the Kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ Then he took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me.” ²⁰In the same way, he gave them the cup after the supper, saying, “This cup is God’s new covenant sealed with my blood, which is poured out for you.

²¹ “But, look! The one who betrays me is here at the table with me! ²²The Son of Man will die as God has decided, but how terrible for that man who betrays him!”

²³ Then they began to ask among themselves which one of them it could be who was going to do this.

²⁴ **An argument broke out among the disciples as to which one of them should be thought of as the greatest.** ²⁵Jesus said to them, “The kings of the pagans have power over their people, and the rulers claim the title ‘Friends of the People’. ²⁶But this is not the way it is with you; rather, the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant. ²⁷Who is greater, the one who sits down to eat or the one who serves? The one who sits down, of course. But I am among you as one who serves.

²⁸ “You have stayed with me all through my trials; ²⁹and just as my Father has given me the right to rule, so I will give you the same right. ³⁰You will eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and you will sit on thrones to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

17. Try to imagine what the disciples were thinking when Jesus said all of those things about His future—“Before I suffer.” They, of course, were expecting Him to be crowned king!
18. Think about church politics for a moment. How do we go about choosing who are to be the leaders in our churches? Our families? Or, in our workplace? Or, is that not talked about? Jesus gave us some suggestions about how we should take our places among others in society.

Matthew 18:1-5: At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?”

² So Jesus called a child, made him stand in front of them, ³and said, “I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. ⁴The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. ⁵And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me.”—*Good News Bible*.* [The most important thing about a child is his/her capacity to grow.]‡

19. How does that advice fit with what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:13-16?

Ephesians 4:13-16: ¹³And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; **we shall become mature people**, reaching to the very height of Christ’s full stature. ¹⁴**Then we shall no longer be children**, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent. ¹⁵Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. ¹⁶Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the

whole body grows and builds itself up through love.—*Good News Bible*.*†

20. Can we accept the idea that true greatness involves giving up our “rights” and embracing heavenly kingdom values? It is clear that the disciples had not yet reached that point! How many times do you think Jesus warned His disciples about what was coming? There are at least three—and maybe four—times recorded when He told them what was going to happen to Him. But, none of them were prepared when it actually happened. (See Luke 18:31-34.)
21. But, Jesus did not give up on them. Are we acting like grown-ups?
22. Jesus had some serious things to say about the spiritual leaders of Israel in His day.

Matthew 23:13-15,23-29: ¹³ **“How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites!** You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in people’s faces, and you yourselves don’t go in, nor do you allow in those who are trying to enter!

¹⁵ **“How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites!** You sail the seas and cross whole countries to win one convert; and when you succeed, you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are!...

²³ **“How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites!** You give to God a tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin, but **you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty.** These you should practice, without neglecting the others. ²⁴Blind guides! You strain a fly out of your drink, but swallow a camel!

²⁵ **“How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites!** You clean the outside of your cup and plate, while the inside is full of what you have obtained by violence and selfishness. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! Clean what is inside the cup first, and then the outside will be clean too!

²⁷ **“How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites!** You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses on the inside. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear good to everybody, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and sins.

²⁹ **“How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites!** You make fine tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of those who lived good lives.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

See also Matthew 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7-9; 22:18-20.

23. Do you understand clearly what a hypocrite is? Think of all the people you know, including yourself. Do any of them act like hypocrites?

Jesus associates four characteristics with the scribes and Pharisees. In the spectrum of Judaism in the first century A.D., the Pharisees represented the conservative religious right. They were interested in the written and oral law and emphasized ritual purity. On the other side of the spectrum were the Sadducees, a group of mostly wealthy leaders, often associated with the elite priestly class. They were highly Hellenized (i.e., they spoke Greek and were at home in Greek philosophy) and did not believe in a judgment or an

afterlife. We would describe them as liberals. **Both groups were guilty of hypocrisy.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, July 14.[†]

24. Are we inclined to hold others to a higher standard than we are willing to reach ourselves? Do we want others to praise us for our religious activities? Do we sometimes even try to claim honor and recognition that is due to God alone?
25. What is amazing is that Jesus continued to deal with His disciples in a very loving way, despite their foibles.

Divine pity marked the countenance of the Son of God as He cast one lingering look upon the temple and then upon His hearers. In a voice choked by deep anguish of heart and bitter tears He exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" [Matthew 23:37, *KJV**]—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 620.1.[‡]

26. Soon after they were arguing about who should be greatest, what assurance did Jesus give the disciples?

John 14:1-6: ¹ "Do not be worried and upset," Jesus told them. "Believe in God and believe also in me. ²There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. ³And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am. ⁴You know the way that leads to the place where I am going."

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way to get there?"

⁶ Jesus answered him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me."—*Good News Bible.**

27. What was Jesus's initial response to the comment by Thomas? Do we really believe what Jesus said as recorded in John 10:10? Are Christians living the abundant life?

John 10:10: "The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness."—*Good News Bible.**

28. Paul seemed assured when he spoke to the Philippians that Jesus was able to finish what He planned to do. Paul was hoping to be released from prison in Rome as he wrote:

Philippians 1:6: And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.—*Good News Bible.**

29. Do we live on a day-by-day basis with our lives anchored in the assurance of what Jesus plans to do for us? No matter how bad things may appear on this earth, God has a glorious plan for us in the life hereafter. It is helpful to see some of the mistakes made by the disciples; that gives us courage that God does not give up on us.

Jeremiah 3:22: Return, all of you who have turned away from the LORD;
he will **heal** you and make you faithful.

You say, "Yes, we are coming to the LORD, because he is our God."—*Good*

30. Most of our Christian friends believe that when a person dies, their “soul” goes directly either to heaven or to “hell.” But, we—as Seventh-day Adventists who believe that a person sleeps in death—are able to understand the issues involved in the pre-advent judgment. When will that happen? It also helps us in our preparation for the second coming.
31. Unless we are able to root out some of the selfish traits in our lives, we cannot be true followers of Jesus.

There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 67.3-68.0.

[In dealing with issues between church members,] conversation has been protracted for hours between the parties concerned, and not only has their time been wasted, but the servants of God are held to listen to them, when the hearts of both parties are unsubdued by grace. If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties.—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings** 119.1.‡ [Were those people just being stubborn?][‡]

32. How can we set goals for ourselves that lead to the elimination of selfishness? Can we hold each other accountable as well? **It is not a sin to be ambitious.**
33. Let us be honest; most of us are good at hiding selfish ambition, hypocrisy, selfishness, and even envy. We want people to like us. But, we recognize that selfishness is still in our lives. Is the Holy Spirit capable of helping us to overcome those selfish roots?
34. In your thinking, is it possible that Jesus could be coming again one of these days soon? What signs do you see in the world around us that hint that such a time is near?
35. This lesson discusses some touchy subjects. These are not things that we often talk about. But, we need to decide how they impact us as individuals. God does not want any of us to be lost. But, He “cannot” admit to heaven people who are motivated by selfishness; that person would just start the great controversy all over again!
36. If we constantly remind ourselves of God’s plans for our lives, does that make it easier to get rid of selfishness?
37. Review again Philippians 2:5-7. What a contrast between our natural selfishness and the experience of Jesus.

The Greek word for “form” is *morphe*, which also can be translated as “the essence of” or having the “nature of.” Jesus was equal with the Father in the very essence of His nature. Christ existed with the Father from all eternity as coequal and coeternal. He “made Himself of no reputation,” or, literally translated, He emptied Himself of His privileges and prerogatives as God’s equal and became a man. He not only became a man, but He also became the lowliest of men, a servant. He not only became a servant, but He also

became a humble, obedient servant. He not only became a man who was a humble, obedient servant, but He also died the death of the cross, the most horrible of all deaths. Jesus, our eternal Lord, our all-powerful Creator, the One served by all, became the servant of all. Jesus' life graphically illustrates that a life of self-sacrificial service is a life of restfulness and lasting joy.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40.[§]

38. Do we really believe that to give produces more peace and joy than getting? Try to imagine what was going on in the thinking of the disciples following that triumphal entry on Sunday. They were ready at any moment to crown Him king. By Thursday evening, the time for the Passover meal had come. What had happened in their thinking?

39. We have suggested in the past that James and John may have been cousins of Jesus.

Matthew 20:20-28:²⁰ Then the wife of Zebedee came to Jesus with her two sons, bowed before him, and asked him a favour.

“What do you want?” Jesus asked her.

She answered, “Promise me that these two sons of mine will sit at your right and your left when you are King.”

²² “You don't know what you are asking for,” Jesus answered the sons. “Can you drink the cup of suffering that I am about to drink?”

“We can,” they answered.

²³ “You will indeed drink from my cup,” Jesus told them, “but I do not have the right to choose who will sit at my right and my left. These places belong to those for whom my Father has prepared them.”

²⁴ When the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with the two brothers. ²⁵So Jesus called them all together and said, “You know that the rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. ²⁶This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; ²⁷and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave—²⁸like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people.”—*Good News Bible*.*

40. What do you think was happening in that story?

Here is the background of the story. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem for the final time. He has unsuccessfully tried to explain to His disciples that He soon will be rejected, tried, falsely accused, and crucified. For some reason, **their presuppositions about the Messiah have kept them from understanding the nature of His mission.** They filter what Jesus says through the mistaken ideas of earthly greatness that swirl around in their heads. Their ideas of prominence in a new kingdom and of worldly greatness are the basis for James and John's mother's request, found in Matthew 20:20, 21.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41.[†]

41. It is true that James and John along with Peter were considered to be the inner circle of Christ's followers. There were several times of which we know that He took them apart from the others as His closest followers.

42. Hadn't Jesus promised a place in the kingdom to them?

Matthew 19:28: Jesus said to them, “You can be sure that when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne in the New Age, then you twelve followers of mine will also sit on thrones, to rule the twelve tribes of Israel.”—*Good News Bible*.*

43. Wouldn't it have seemed expected to James and John that if Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom, they should be among the leaders?

44. How did Jesus respond to that grasping for position?

Matthew 20:25-28: ²⁵ “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”—*New King James Version*.*

45. Think of all the people that are regarded as great in our world. What qualified them for those positions? How would they have been rated in Christ's kingdom? Are we willing to set ourselves aside in service to others? That is turning the world's priorities upside down.

In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, and education were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders. The higher classes were to think, decide, enjoy, and rule; the lower were to obey and serve. Religion, like all things else, was a matter of authority. The people were expected to believe and practice as their superiors directed. The right of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.

Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 550.2-3.

46. This lesson has proved to be a real challenge for most of us. Someone has rightly said: “Anyone wrapped up in himself or herself is a very small package.”

47. Our Bible study guide advises us to find a quiet place somewhere to be alone with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in choosing someone that we rub shoulders with every day and see if there is something we can do to help them. How would that impact us and them if we did that?

© 2021, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Text in brackets is added. §Italic type is in the source. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: June 5, 2021

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSSTG-Hart\Resting in Christ\SS-3-Rest in Christ-2021_07_16-Fin+.wpd