

## Can't Stop Stupid

East Ontario, St. Mary's and Holy Trinity

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026

*Holy God, give us eyes to see and ears to hear your voice, amid our imperfect words and understanding, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Forty years long I detested that generation and said, "This people are wayward in their hearts; they do not know my ways."

So, I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest."

This statement doesn't trouble me. I think if you picture Jesus saying it while watching us be our own worst enemies, it's like a sigh of exasperation. I had a foreman once when I worked interior demolition in Calgary—breaking drywall and sledgehammering cinder blocks and removing glass. The foreman had to do a safety talk every morning, to remind us how not to hurt ourselves. He'd often look at us and say, "guys, I can't stop stupid."

Let me try to speak to "the wrath of God" this morning. I want you to remember that Christianity isn't a set of ideas in our imagination; it's a witness. To think like a Christian, it's best not to be picturing something in your mind right now, and better to be focused on what's going on in this room and your heart. The point is to live and witness and experience something from God. The Bible is a testimony: an Old and New Testament; it's a description of experience, not just a set of ideas or a fantasy we project on the inside of our heads. These jabs: "I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest,'" or being called "enemies of God" or that we need to be saved from "the wrath of God"—we can't hear what they mean if we're listening for a religious fantasy or spiritual philosophy. We have to look for the experience being witnessed to.

We have to observe the life and world being testified to. What's the Bible describing, what's the testimony of these Old and New Testaments?

Well, can you maybe look at your life and tell if or when you have a lack of rest, a lack of peace, when you feel disconnected or even at odds with God, at odds with your neighbours, the world, yourself? "I swore in my wrath, 'they should not enter into my rest.'" I find that if you step back from the offense and observe your experience of restlessness or lack of peace or disconnection, it's rarely, if ever, God inflicting some trouble on you. It's almost always you inflicting trouble on yourself, or holding yourself back from rest, peace, and connection, because you have restlessness and no-peace right down in your heart: an inability to be satisfied, worry about things you can't control, fret and judgement about people you disagree with, a lack of self-control to refuse vices or to say 'no' to more work and over-commitment, the refusal to talk about what you need to talk about. When you here of God's wrath, remember *whose* wrath: the God of peace and rest and love says, "This people are wayward in their hearts; they do not know my ways." Usually—not always; I'll grant that; but usually—God's wrath looks like the fruit of our own failures. Sometimes you just gotta shake your head at yourself, half-smile, and say: "man, you can't stop stupid."

The experience that the scriptures and the lives of the faithful witness to is a God who creates peace, and creates rest and creates connection despite humanity as a whole, and we individuals, creating restlessness and conflict and alienation. That experience is called God's grace.

This experience of God's grace tends to have the pattern of Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jews like Jesus refused to speak to Samaritans, and she, in particular, maybe wasn't the most respectable person. But Jesus addresses her and makes friends

with her despite the wrath between his people and hers, and the judgement even her own people would have for her. He steps into her state of restlessness, and conflict, and alienation and offers her the hand of friendship. This is the shape of God's grace. And if we are to have an experience like the woman at the well, we will also experience having our failures exposed to us. We can go away from an encounter with Jesus' Holy Spirit, thinking, joyfully, as if it's a good thing, "this man told me everything I ever did!" The exposure of our failures becomes release to a new life.

If you want to understand Jesus' cross more: think of his little act of humility with her becoming a big act of humility with the whole of human history; a loving confrontation not with one persons' sin but the sum total of every small mistake to every unforgivable crime ever committed. His shed blood and his broken body is God entering into the worst place of human woe, and there the weight of all sin—all the despair of our restless hearts, our violent wills, our broken bonds of friendship; the whole world and history of it—Jesus takes upon himself wholesale at the cross. In his resurrection, he burst open a way out of that wrath.

So. If it's possible for you, in your experience, to have friendship with God, it's because what Jesus did on the cross worked. If you are able to find peace in this life, it's because what Jesus did on the cross worked. If you are able to find rest in this life, free from discontent and a bottomless pit of desire, it's because what Jesus did on the cross worked. He entered into the deepest pit of human trouble, and by his resurrection, he came out the other side, "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." Like the woman at the well, let him expose your failings, and then, let him make you new.

Thanks be to God. Amen.