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In his most recent stand-up comedy special *Joy in the Trenches*, comedian, podcast host, and author Trevor Noah spoke about what he called one of the conundrums of life. He noticed this particularly difficult situation when scrolling through social media. It started when one person posted they had just graduated from college. After four years of hard work, overcoming many obstacles, getting good grades despite challenges, this person was so happy, so elated, they were going to celebrate. And they invited everyone in the area to join the celebration and share in that happiness. However, in the comment section – and I want to caution us all to be careful about venturing into online comment sections – Trevor read a comment that heavily criticized the graduate. "How can you be so callous and insensitive", the critic demanded, "to celebrate when there is so much suffering and pain in the world?"

This made Trevor reflect on the situation. On one hand, there is a person who worked hard, made sacrifices, earned a degree, and wants to celebrate that accomplishment. On the other, there is another person who doesn't feel like celebrating because of the pain, suffering and injustice in the world. Trevor realized neither person is wrong, which causes the conundrum of who is right? Then he did something very religious: he made space for both. He let both points of view exist together and didn't try to fix or solve the conundrum.

Instead, he let it work on him and discovered another way to think about it in a book he was reading about soldiers in WWI. The book was a collection of accounts from soldiers who fought from the trenches. Of course, every war is hard on soldiers; trench warfare is particularly grueling, and takes a heavy toll physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. In the book the veteran soldiers wrote how they dealt with being in the trenches.

Their stories surprised him. They got through a miserable time because of small moments of joy. When they weren't fighting, they hosted card games, read a sarcastic newsletter several soldiers published lampooning commanding officers, and they sang. The two sides sang to each other, and sometimes they even sang together.

One story in particular struck Trevor as a good example. One day a milk cow wandered into no man's land between the two sides and both sides wanted the cow. They decided to shoot for it – they tossed coins into the air, and which ever side shot a coin got the cow. The British won. The Germans asked for their coins back, and the British returned them. Everyone said that was a fun game. It was a small moment of joy in the trenches.

The story made Trevor realize the soldiers could have those moments of joy because they weren't fighting to fight. They were fighting for something, maybe even for those moments of joy because such moments provided a rest from the war. This is what is missing from the comment sections on Facebook and other social media sites. Perhaps those comments are fighting for the sake of fighting and that is why they miss out on joy. And that is how Trevor Noah worked through a conundrum.

Jesus encountered a conundrum of his own in today's Gospel that opened with Jesus complaining about his critics by comparing them to children refusing to play. Whether the game was happy or sad, no one would join in. Like John the Baptist who lived an austere, highly disciplined life and his critics said he was not in his right mind. Jesus' critics on the other hand said he was too rough, hanging out with the lower classes doing low class things. If Jesus and John the Baptist had been on Facebook, both of their comment sections probably would have revealed neither of them could get it right. There will always be critics who criticize for the sake of criticizing, who fight for the sake of fighting, and who use the pain and suffering that is very real in the world to distract from joy but who do nothing themselves to ease another's pain or suffering.

The rest of today's Gospel shows us how Jesus worked through that conundrum, much like Trevor Noah worked through his. Only, Jesus didn't turn to books, he turned to God and reflected on the people who connected with him through the joy he brought. The people who did play with him. Perhaps Jesus realized the joy they found in him is a connection to the holy. And while it didn't take away the pain and suffering in the world, it did provide a way through by making people feel like they weren't alone, that God was with them, God loved them and cared for them. That joy helped them realize they had value not because of what they did for a living, but simply being loved by God. Instead of a never-ending grind of fights, oppression, or suffering, the people who responded to Jesus found rest from all that. Not rest like a nap or cessation of work, although that is part of what rest can be, but rest like a break, a freedom from a system that values people only for their ability to produce, conform, or perform; a system that is quick to dispose of people when they can't live up to its persnickety standards of production. The rest Jesus offers is a form of liberation from all that and brings the joy of God's presence closer.

That invitation of Jesus still stands today. We might experience conundrums pressing in on us, fights for their own sake that can leave us exhausted and steal the joy from any celebration like birthdays or anniversaries or even small moments like singing together. Jesus doesn't offer an escape from the conundrums of life, but he does invite us to share them with him. Perhaps God doesn't desire us to carry such heavy burdens alone, and instead wishes to share them with us. When we accept Jesus' invitation to take on his yoke, to be connected to him, the pain and suffering of life won't magically vanish, but we might be more aware of those moments of joy, those connections with Jesus, that help us through the trenches of suffering and maybe even help us ease the suffering of another. That is the rest Jesus offers, to break away from being trapped in conundrums to be free to find the joy in small moments, like the beauty of a sunset, the energy of family and friends gathering to celebrate, hearing a favorite song on the radio, watching someone's face light up when you say a kind word, playing with a child and sharing joy with another. There are so many moments of God's love present on earth we might notice when we accept Jesus' invitation to rest from the commotion caused by the fights over who is right and learn to share the joy Jesus brings everywhere, even in the trenches.