

In the Words of Jesus

"Rest for your Soul"

Matthew 11:28-30

Introduction

Today, we are continuing our series of messages on "In the Words of Jesus. Last week, we learned that Jesus was a master servant, as illustrated in John 13. But Jesus was also a master teacher and used many different teaching forms. In this series, we are looking at some of the short, powerful statements Jesus made.

Today, we will take a look at Matthew Chapter 11, where Jesus says, "**Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light.**" (Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV)

These profound words can change your life! When your life is full of stress, anxiety, and overwhelming frustration, Jesus says, "Come to me!" This verse has got to be one of the most comforting verses in the New Testament. It's an open invitation from Jesus to all those who are weary and burdened. All we need to do is be willing to come to Jesus.

Chapter 11 comes after Jesus sent the disciples out on a mission. John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed the Messiah. Jesus then addressed the crowd regarding John, who was the messenger sent to prepare the way for the Messiah.

In verse 2, Matthew writes, "And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "**Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: *The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.***" As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "**What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is *he* of whom it is written: 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'**" "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:2-15 NKJV)

Sadly, many in that generation rejected both John and Jesus. They said John was demon-possessed and Jesus was a drunkard. But Jesus proclaims He is one with the Father and that no one can know God except through Him.

He, then, offers this invitation to the weary and burdened. He tells those willing to come to Him: "I will give you rest." Jesus came to reveal the Father to those willing to receive Him. He offered a relationship with God free from the unnecessary burdens the religious leaders of His day placed upon the people.

Jesus fully endorsed strict adherence to the Law God gave Moses, called the Ten Commandments. But He consistently opposed the various traditions and laws the religious leaders added on their own. Jesus comes with a better way. In complete opposition to the way of the Pharisees, Jesus says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

In ancient times, a yoke was placed on the neck of two animals, causing them to work together in a field. Taking up Christ's yoke is learning to work with Him in union. Being yoked with Christ opens up a life of discipleship that allows us to learn from Christ and be guided by His presence.

There was a definite difference between Christ's humility and the religious leaders' self-righteousness. The "burden" is what Jesus expects of us as His followers. It's true Jesus has teachings and commandments, but they are nothing like the enslaving requirements of the Pharisees. Jesus' burden is light. In 1 John 5:3, John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3 NKJV)

Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13 NKJV)

The "rest" Jesus talks about is to be free from the burden of sin. Sin is a terrible master. It enslaves you, poisons your life, destroys your relationships, and leads to your death (spiritually and physically). If we obey God, it leads to our freedom and righteous living. Christ's redemptive work on the cross saves us from the penalty of sin, but it also breaks sin's power over us. Thank God for His grace! If we accept Christ's invitation and enter His rest, we can break free from sin by placing our hope in His death and resurrection.

Jesus also says His yoke is easy. The way of Christ is much easier than the way of the world. Jesus described the Pharisees as legalists in Matthew 23. "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: **The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**" (Matthew 23:1-4 NKJV) In verse 20, Jesus rebukes the cities that did not repent when they heard the gospel message.

Matthew says that Jesus "began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." (Matthew 11:20-24 NKJV)

Those who are comfortable with their sinfulness are generally unresponsive to God's voice. When Jesus says that it will be more tolerable for some cities on the day of judgment, He implies that there are different degrees of judgment. Some will be punished more severely in the final judgment than others. The cities Jesus rebuked faced God's judgment; each one was destroyed and has remained desolate for generations. Capernaum was Jesus' home base and headquarters. So, He had to be moved to see Capernaum remain as hardened as ever. William Barclay wrote, "These cities did not attack Jesus Christ; they did not drive him from their gates; they did not seek to crucify him; they simply disregarded him. Neglect can kill as much as persecution can."

In verse 25, Jesus praises those who receive His message. At that time, Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (Matthew 11:25-30 NKJV)

Jesus rejoiced that God chose to reveal himself to the ordinary people that the world would call simple and babes. Jesus proclaimed that only *He* had a genuine relationship with God the Father and that the Father could only be known through His Son. Jesus makes some astonishing claims:

- There are no secrets between the Father and the Son.
- No one knows the Son as well as the Father does.
- No one knows the Father as well as the Son does.
- The Son chooses to reveal the Father to us.

In verse 28, Jesus delivers this astounding invitation, "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV)

Jesus did not say, "Go to Moses," He said, "Come to me!" We come to Jesus in faith and trust. Not to a doctrine, particular church, ordinance, or ministry. We come to know the Savior. Jesus calls out to those who are burdened. He calls out to those who know their lives are a heavy weight to bear.

Jesus also invites us to share His yoke and learn from Him. Jewish teachers often used the idea of a yoke to express an obligation to God. There was the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of the law, the yoke of the command, the yoke of repentance, the yoke of faith, and the yoke of sacrifice. Jesus simplifies it all and says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."

Jesus has a servant's heart, which He displayed throughout His ministry. He is the one who bears our burdens and teaches us a better way to live. Jesus described this gift as rest for your soul. Jesus borrows this phrase from Jeremiah 6, but His invitation is linked to His name and His way.

The yoke is easy, and the burden is light because Jesus bears it with us. When a farmer wanted to train a new ox to plow, he would yoke it with an older, stronger, and more experienced animal who bore the heaviest part of the burden and guided the young animal through the learning process.

"The word "easy" is the Greek word meaning well-fitting. The yoke was carefully adjusted so that it would fit well. It was tailor-made to fit the ox. The call to follow Jesus isn't a call to a lazy or indulgent life. There is still a yoke to bear and a burden to carry.

If your yoke is uncomfortable and your burden is too heavy, it must be your yoke and burden because Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

So what is this rest? Where do we find it, and how do we enter in to it?

I. What is this rest?

We often think of rest as physical inactivity, such as taking a nap or taking a break from labor. We use personal days and plan vacations to take a break from the routines and labor of life and work. These are definitely forms of rest, but that isn't what Jesus is talking about.

The rest Jesus is talking about is much deeper than physical and mental rest; it is rest for our soul! It is a spiritual rest for our innermost being. It is a rest we can enjoy even when we're working. In fact, "yoke" is connected to labor. However, this rest is "to refresh, or to be of calm and patient expectation."

Are you weary of life's exhausting demands? Are you heavy-laden from the crushing burdens of adversities, crises, failures, or regrets? Are you tired of carrying these burdens alone? It's time to accept Christ's invitation and find that rest for your soul! It's something we all want and need!

The question is, "Where can we find it?"

II. Where is this rest found?

Jesus says that the soul rest for each person and rest from every burden is found in Him. What a remarkable claim! No one could offer this kind of peace to everyone but God Himself.

Jesus claims that He alone can give your soul the rest it needs because He is God, and He is with us ("Immanuel").

You cannot find rest for your soul in religion, science, or philosophy. You cannot find rest for your soul in a moral code (e.g., Confucianism; Islam). You cannot find rest for your soul in self-actualization (e.g., New Age; self-help). You can only find rest for your soul in a relationship with Jesus.

And He is able and willing to give us the soul rest we so desperately need.

III. How do we enter in to this rest from Jesus?

So, how do we enter in to this rest from Jesus? Jesus answers this question through two invitations. "Come to Me" is His initial invitation, and "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me" is His continuing invitation.

When we put our trust in Christ, He delivers us from the weary burden of being separated from God's love and care. It is the same invitation Jesus issued in Jn. 6:35. "And Jesus said to them, **"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."**

(John 6:35 NKJV)

Jesus gives us spiritual life by reuniting us with God. Jesus is just as present here in this sanctuary as He was when He spoke these words to His disciples. His offer is just as valid to you today as it was to them. Maybe that's why you're here today! Maybe Jesus wants you to hear His invitation to reconnect to God and receive His saving grace. Jesus wants you to experience His rest in a way that He knows will free you from guilt, give you hope for the future, and a sense of coming home to a life of peace and rest.

Jesus urges us as His followers to "learn from Me" because it will lead to the soul-rest that the Law cannot provide. Learn everything you can about Jesus' teachings because He is a gentle and humble Teacher. Jesus is not harsh or demanding like the Law. He is humble and gentle, which makes learning from Him pleasant and helpful.

The key to soul rest is to become like Jesus, having a meek and humble heart. Jesus can teach us the way to meekness and humility and lead us into soul rest. Andrew Murray wrote, "Meekness and lowliness (humility) is the one thing Jesus offers us; in it we find perfect rest of soul."

Conclusion

In Isaiah 57, the prophet writes, "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy *place*, With him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15 NKJV)

The Lord dwells with the humble. He revives them and gives them peace. But the soul of the wicked cannot be quiet and has no peace. If we want to take refuge in the Lord, our pride must be removed, and a humble heart must be developed.

David writes in Psalm 131, "LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child *is* my soul within me." (Psalms 131:1-2 NKJV)

A. W. Tozer writes, "Lord, make me childlike. Deliver me from the urge to compete with another for place or prestige or position. Help me to forget myself and find my true peace in You . . . Lay upon me Your easy yoke of self-forgetfulness so that through it I may find rest.

The humble are not completely free of pride, but they quickly repent when they see their pride. Humility is a goal we must pursue, even though it may seem impossible to achieve. The power in humility lies not in attaining it, but rather in pursuing it."

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV)