

Come to Me

“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)



Jesus offers the words above that often adorn crafty wall hangings, and due to its familiarity, they may often be under-appreciated. In context (if this chapter describes a single incident), Jesus challenged the multitude regarding their view of John the Baptist. John has been imprisoned, and sends disciples to question Jesus about His identity (11:1-6). John appears to have questions about his own testimony, perhaps as the result of a misunderstanding of the spiritual nature of the kingdom. Jesus alleviates his concerns and then defends him to the multitude (11:7-15). The Lord then offers a couple of reprimands: first, of “*this generation*” because of their fickle regard for God’s spokesmen (11:16-19); second, of those cities that had witnessed His miracles but had not repented (11:20-25). The chapter concludes with an apparent public prayer of gratitude for the “babes” who honestly accept His teaching, recognizing Him as the key person to listen to concerning truly *knowing* the Father (11:25-27). As He concludes His rebuke of the doubt and disbelief around Him, Jesus offers this invitation, “**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...**”

There are some elements and principles in this invitation from Jesus that merit our careful attention...

First, **discipleship is voluntary**. Christ invites you and me to servitude, and to the fellowship with God that results (the “knowing” God of verse 27). Jesus imposes His will on no man, regardless of any idea that grace is somehow irresistible or the charismatic notion that “God the Spirit” has overwhelmed me. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus calls upon any person who “desires” to follow. There will be a time when the Lord demands compliance. “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14.11; Isaiah 45.23). For now, this present time, however, we are free to choose whether we will accept or deny His Lordship. What have you done?

Given the voluntary nature of our service, we ought to be cautious about resentment. If discipleship demands sacrifices, that I follow Christ in my life, I should do so willingly, enthusiastically, and joyfully, for I have chosen this path. Are we puzzled by people who rise against some demand of Christ when they have volunteered to submit to Him? We would do well to evaluate our attitude about service. After all, it is a service we choose. Right?

Second, **Jesus offers “rest for your soul.”** It seems likely that the reason we sometimes view Christianity as a ball and chain is because we have failed to fully appreciate the blessings. Jesus calls to those who “labor and are heavy laden.” We often forget just how burdensome sin truly is! The weary toil and great weight that Jesus addresses here is not physical or occupational – it is spiritual and moral! The selfish pursuit of our lusts and whims, along with Satan’s devious allurements, crushes us under the consequences that follow – destructive habits; illicit relationships; isolating injustices; guilt; fear; anxiety; disease... Spiritual failure promotes emotional, mental, and psychological damage that can occupy us so that we become paralyzed by our own regrets. Repent! As moral beings, it is difficult to escape the concept of right/justice and we must grapple with such spiritual certainty.

As Jesus looks upon this multitude, and upon mankind, with all of our doubt and disbelief and disobedience, He sees burdened souls in need of rest. Do you need rest? Judgment is certainly coming, but His offer right now is deliverance. We do not have to live hopeless, miserable lives. We can find spiritual relief. We can appreciate the offer of Christ as “true rest” depends upon our understanding of just how horrible is the alternative. We can get so caught up in all that we must sacrifice or all that we miss that we fail to consider where we would be otherwise. We need to see Jesus!

Third, **there is a yoke to be accepted**. For many, this is the difficulty. The imagery of a yoke is the imagery of a burden to be borne or that of servitude/slavery. We dismiss the drudgery of our own sins, deceiving ourselves with the idea that we are somehow “free” and that discipleship will bring oppression and misery. Really? We must also appreciate that a yoke implies a joint effort. In verse 27, Jesus observes that no one can know the Father unless the Son reveals Him. Jesus invites us to serve *with* Himself, to work in unison *with* the Messiah as we strive to become children of God. Our union with Him is not a pairing with some egoist, taskmaster, or tyrant. We labor with One who is “gentle and lowly in heart!” Right?

Our Lord and yoke-fellow has our spiritual well-being at heart. He does ask that we serve and learn, but in so doing we become loving, joyful, peaceful, longsuffering, kind, good, faithful, gentle, temperate (see Galatians 5:22-23). The end of His service leads to holiness as we are being “transformed...from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Discipleship, particularly as compared to the excessive weight of sin, is a yoke that is *easy*, a burden that is *light*!

Time has brought perspective to life. We can see what we didn’t see earlier. For some, the thought of discipleship is abhorrent. Unfortunately, for some Christians, the yoke of Christ is a terrible burden. What a pity. The beauty, and paradox, of the offer of Jesus Christ is a yoke that is easier, and a burden that is lighter, than anything this world can provide. Are we learning from Jesus during this unprecedented time of social separation from one another?

Jesus says, “**Come to Me...and I will give you rest...**”

By Russ Bowman,
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Bday/Anniv Lunch: ...when we can!

Bible Study: Consider your study of God’s Word (see **2 Timothy 2:15**) Take time to learn Scripture today... and every day!

NMCCH: collecting aluminum foil and kitchen trash bags (pick up is later...)

* —THANK YOU for reading this!