

Come to Me and Surrender Your Burdens

Matthew 11:25-30

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing our discussion regarding surrender but in a different context. It is one I think we can all relate to in how most of us have lived our lives and missed out on the joy of our salvation. First, I want to refresh our memories on a quote I ended with last week by Dallas Willard.

Dallas Willard

“The cost of discipleship is indeed great. But the cost of nondiscipleship is far greater. Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated through by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God’s overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said He came to bring.”

John 10:7-10

I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰ The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

Notice the last phrase, “a rich and satisfying life.” Some translations translate this as an “abundance of life.” So why do many of us not live this life we have been given abundantly? Full of joy? It is often because we are carrying the burdens of our lives looking for God to give us a grade or a reply such as “Good job! You are doing good. Come back when you can carry more!” The Christian life is not like a weightlifting program. That is simply not how God works. *He doesn’t send us out for us to do the job but rather sends us out so that He can do the job through us.* The more we surrender our will to His, the more we can be used by God which will be recognized at the rewards ceremony (2 Cor. 5:10) at the end of history in the judgment.

Matthew 11:25-30 ESV

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:25-30 NLT

²⁵ At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. ²⁶ Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way! ²⁷ “My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” ²⁸ Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

CONTEXT & MESSAGE:

N.T. Wright

Imagine a gifted musician walking around among people who can only just manage to sing in tune. That must have been what it was like for Jesus. He must have known from early on that there was something different about him, that he seemed to have an inside track on knowing who Israel’s God truly was, and what he was wanting for his people.

This must have made it all the more galling when he discovered that most of his contemporaries didn’t want to hear what he was telling them. Most of them, alarmed at the direct challenge he presented, were either resisting him outright or, as we’ve seen, making excuses for not believing him or following him. Opposition was mounting. And, strangely, this gave Jesus a fresh, further insight into the way his father was operating. This, in turn, resulted in a burst of praise as he glimpsed the strange, unexpected way God was working.

Jewish writings had, for a millennium and more, spoken warmly about the wisdom of the wise. God gave wisdom to those who feared him; a long tradition of **Torah**-study and piety indicated that those who devoted themselves to learning the law and trying to tease out its finer points would become wise, would ultimately know God. For the average Jew of Jesus’ day, this put ‘wisdom’ about as far out of reach as being a brain surgeon or test pilot seems for most

people today. You needed to be a scholar, trained in languages and literature, with leisure to ponder and discuss weighty and complicated matters.

Jesus sliced through all that with a stroke. No, he declared: you just need to be a little child. Jesus had come to know his father the way a son does: not by studying books about him, but by living in his presence, listening for his voice, and learning from him as an apprentice does from a master, by watching and imitating. And he was now discovering that the wise and learned were getting nowhere, and that the ‘little people’—the poor, the sinners, the tax-collectors, ordinary folk—were discovering more of God, simply by following him, Jesus, than the learned specialists who declared that what he was doing didn’t fit with their complicated theories.

As a result, Jesus had come to see that he was himself acting as a window onto the living God. Where he was, and through his words, people were coming to see who ‘the father’ really was. He seemed to have the gift and the task of drawing back the curtain and ‘unveiling’ the truth about God; and the word for ‘unveil’ here is *apocalypse*, which still today speaks of something dramatic, sudden and earth-shattering.¹

I. The Burdens of a Fallen World

- A. The Fallen world is a world with problems.
- B. We often act shocked when problems befall us, but in reality we are shocked that they happened to us.
- C. The hope of the Gospel is that we have a living hope even when...problems strike our home.
- D. Many today are financially burdened, grieving a loved one, neck deep in worry and anxiety. The burdens in the Fallen world are real and present and often overwhelming.

Charles Spurgeon

“The daily troubles we have are meant to drive us to God.”

- E. What we see in this invitation and in greater scale, Christmas itself, is that our troubles brought God to us.

¹ Wright, T. (2004). [*Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15*](#) (pp. 135–137). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

II. The Invitation of Jesus to the Burdened and Weary

- A. Jesus says, “Come...”
- B. This is not just any invitation, but rather an invitation from God Himself.
- C. “All who are weary and heavy burdened” are the whom in which this invitation is offered.
- D. Jesus states, “And I will give you rest.” The word rest in the Greek is the word **ἀναπαύω**
- a. “to cause to cease.” Hom. Il., 17, 550; Gr. Sir. 18:16; mid. “to cease with something,” Xen. An., IV, 2, 4. b. “to give someone rest” or “to refresh someone,” Xenoph. Cyrop., VII, 1, 4; LXX 2 Βασ. 7:11; 1 Ch. 22:18; Prv. 29:17; Gr. Sir., 3:6; Mark Lit., 129, 11 (Brightman); mid. “to rest from something,” Plat. Critias, 106a; LXX Est. 9:16 (ἀπὸ τῶν πολεμίων). c. mid. “to rest,” LXX Ex. 32:12; of the dead, Gr. Sir. 22:11; IG, XIV, 1717; Act. Andr., 15 (83, 7); Anth. Pal., 12, 50; d. mid. “to remain at rest,” LXX Da. 12:13. e. mid. “to rest on” (→ ἐπαναπαύομαι), LXX Is. 11:2 (the permanent resting of the Spirit of God in distinction from temporally limited filling with the Spirit); Cl. Al. Ecl. Proph., 56, 6 f.; Iambl. Comm. Math. Scient., 8, p. 33 (of the shadow).²
- b. Finally, in Mt. 11:28 the word comprehends the whole saving work of Jesus³
- E. Jesus desires to give rest to your souls. This word can also be translated as “interruption.” God wants to interrupt our lives with His presence and peach in which our souls find rest.

III. Take My Yoke Upon You

- A. Jesus wants to teach us a new way of living.
- B. We must learn to be teachable. Humility only provides that attitude.
- C. Why should we let Him teach us? Because the Teacher is humble and gentle and what He teaches gives us rest in a burdensome world.
- D. But what does He mean when He says, “Take My Yoke Upon you?”

² Bauernfeind, O. (1964–). [ἀναπαύω, ἀνάπαυσις, ἐπαναπαύω](#). In G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 350). Eerdmans.

³ Bauernfeind, O. (1964–). [ἀναπαύω, ἀνάπαυσις, ἐπαναπαύω](#). In G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 350). Eerdmans.

E. What is a yoke?

Answer: *a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to a plow or cart that they pull in unison.*⁴

F. Jesus tells us to harness our lives to Him so that we can find rest in His strength.

G. What does that look like?

- a. It looks like rest in the trust we have in Jesus. We lay aside our worries knowing that He has us despite our anxiety.
- b. It looks like trusting Him in surrender of our lives because we have nothing to offer ourselves in our own strength.
- c. It looks like staying conscious of God's presence in our lives when in times past we have forgotten Him due to our busyness.

H. Why should we do this? Because Jesus said, "I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

I. Only in Christ can our hearts find contentment.

CONCLUSION:

N.T. Wright

Wasn't that a bit daunting for his followers? Isn't it rather forbidding to discover that the true God can be known only through Jesus? No. It might have felt like that if it had been somebody else; but with Jesus everything was different. It gave him the platform from which to issue what is still the most welcoming and encouraging invitation ever offered. 'Come to me,' he said, 'and I'll give you rest.' The **Pharisees** had spoken of people being called to carry 'the yoke of the Torah', the heavy burden of the Jewish law with all its commandments. Jesus offered a different 'yoke', which, because it came from his mercy and love, was easy to bear.

How could following Jesus really be that easy? Didn't he say, himself, that people had to be prepared to leave behind family, possessions, even their own life? Yes, he did. But the ease and the joy, the rest and the refreshment which he offered, all spring from his own inner character,

⁴ Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A., eds. (2004). In [*Concise Oxford English dictionary*](#) (11th ed.). Oxford University Press.

his gentleness and warmth to all who turn to him, weighed down by burdens moral, physical, emotional, financial or whatever. He is offering what he has in himself to offer.

When he declares here, in the old translation, that he is 'meek and lowly of heart', he isn't boasting that he's attained some special level of spiritual achievement. He is encouraging us to believe that he isn't going to stand over us like a policeman, isn't going to be cross with us like an angry schoolteacher. And the welcome he offers, for all who abandon themselves to his mercy, is the welcome God offers through him. This is the invitation which pulls back the curtain and lets us see who 'the father' really is—and encourages us to come into his loving, welcoming presence.⁵

1 Peter 5:5-7

And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for

“God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble.”

⁶ So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. ⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

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⁵ Wright, T. (2004). [Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15](#) (p. 137). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Pe 5:5–7). Tyndale House Publishers.