

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

January 19, 2025

I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 11:28-30**, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

B. Pray

II. Jesus’ rest, Jesus’ yoke, The truth about the Christian life

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1. These words from Jesus are well known, often quoted, and often used as words of comfort. Yet in my experience, growing in godliness, living the Christian life, loving those around me as God says I ought to love them, and serving God as a pastor is hardly easy, and the burdens of such a life are hardly light.

2. Jesus’ life affirms my experience. For example:

a. During His ministry years, Jesus was turned on by His own religious leaders – who should have been supportive and protective – and they tried to turn the crowds against Him while planning ways to kill Him.

b. Jesus described His living situation as “the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (**Matthew 8:20**).

c. As for personal space and privacy, Jesus had to repeatedly endure large crowds following Him and pressing in on Him (**Mark 5:24**).

d. In front of all the disciples, the mother of James and John asked Jesus to “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left,” which was upsetting to the other disciples (**Matthew 20:20-21**).

e. During the last hours of His life, Jesus suffered being spit upon, beaten with fists and slapped, whipped, mocked, falsely accused, abandoned by His disciples, and crucified as a common criminal.

f. I would not call this a restful life or an easy yoke or a light burden, would you?

3. The Apostle Paul wrote that during his ministry years he endured afflictions, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, sleeplessness, hunger and thirst, being stoned, shipwrecked, being in danger from robbers and false brethren, being falsely accusations, and bearing the challenges of caring for the churches. I would not call this a restful life or an easy yoke or a light burden? Would you?
 4. As Christians living the Christ-like life today,
 - a. **Jesus** asks us to deny ourselves, take up our cross – daily, and follow His example in how we live. He says we are blessed if we are insulted, falsely accused, and persecuted for the sake of righteousness. He tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. And He calls some of us to go into the world, preach the gospel, make disciples, and teach them all that He taught His disciples.
 - b. The **writer** of Hebrews urges us to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, to run with endurance the race that is set before us, and to do all this without growing weary and losing heart.
 - c. **Paul** calls us to run the race of spiritual growth and godly living in such a way that we win; to exercise self-control in all things; to discipline our bodily impulses and passions so as to make them our slave. He even says wives are to be subject to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives in the same way Christ loves the church. And then he urges us to suffer hardship with him, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus.
 - d. I do not call this a restful life or an easy yoke or a light burden.
 5. So, what is Jesus talking about when He says He will give rest to the weary and heavy-laden? What does He mean when He says His yoke is easy and His burden is light? To understand these words in a way that makes sense, we must start at their beginning.
- B. [28] Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
1. **First**, Jesus begins by saying, “**Come to Me.**” This is an invitation – an invitation that can be accepted, or rejected, or ignored – which if ignored has the same result as rejection. In addition, this invitation only makes sense if we realize we are weary and heavy-laden, and therefore need some kind of major change in our thinking and living if we are going to find rest. And finally, this invitation can only accomplish its intended purpose if we yoke ourselves to Jesus –

- because only Jesus knows what we need to know and can lead us where we need to go in order for such a change to become a reality.
2. **Second**, Jesus addresses His invitation to “**all who are weary and heavy-laden**.” To be **weary** speaks of feeling fatigued, exhausted, worn-out, and maybe even burned-out. To be **heavy-laden** refers to being weighed down or encumbered or bound by the demands and duties that each of us face in life.
 - a. However, though the weariness and the burden of duties Jesus is speaking of are felt in your mind and body, the cause of your weariness is not what is going on outside of you, but what is going on inside of you. In other words, they are caused by how you are looking at and what you are telling yourself about what you are experiencing.
 - b. Therefore, the problem that needs changing is not your circumstances, but your beliefs, values, fears, desires, ways of thinking, who you trust, and what you tell yourself.
 3. **Third**, Jesus said, “**I will give you rest**.” However, the rest He gives is not rest from hard work and long days, or from the challenges, difficulties, and trials of life, or from the disappointments and hurts caused by foolish, unthinking, insensitive, selfish people.
 - a. The rest Jesus gives is from the recurring emotions, the overwhelming feelings, the obsessive thoughts, the oppressive anxiety, the irrational fears, the foolish beliefs, and the discouragement, despair, or even depression that result from the way we are viewing the unpleasant, unwanted, harsher realities of life.
 - b. In other words, Jesus is not offering us rest from the harsh realities in the world around us, but from our distrust-of-God, self-serving, self-pitying, fear-driven, self-protective, mentally exhausting, and emotionally gripping ways of viewing and thinking about the difficult and disappointing realities in the world around us.
 4. However, as I said, you have to realize you are weary and heavy-laden in this way in order for Jesus’ invitation to make sense, and in order for you to see your need of a significant inward change, and in order for you to want to yoke yourself to Jesus for the kind of rest He gives.
- C. To those who come, Jesus says, [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **meek** (gentle) and **humble in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
1. Why the yoke? Because Jesus’ way – which is the only emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy way of dealing with the harsher

- realities in the world around us cannot be found in the human nature we were born with. Neither will Jesus' way magically appear in our thoughts as a reasonable option during our teen and adult years – which is why we are in trouble and in need of yoking ourselves to the One who both knows how and has the power to enable us to change.
- a. And though the world's wisdom and the world's forms of self-help are of some benefit, they are sufficiently lacking in what is needed to be able to teach or enable us to find true rest for our souls.
 - b. The reality is, we need something far greater, far more powerful, far deeper reaching, and far more transforming than what the world can offer – or even what we can come up with on our own – which is why we need Jesus to teach us, empower us, and lead us out of our inward sickness into inward health.
 - c. And we need this work of Jesus, not just at first, but for the rest of our lives if we are to remain true to Jesus' way in how we see, interpret, react to, and inwardly deal with the world around us.
2. And why Jesus? First of all, because He is God, and as God, He is all-knowing and all-powerful.
 - a. As all-knowing, He knows everything there is to know about living this inwardly peaceful life of rest. And He also knows each one of us – with our own personal fears, peculiarities, passions, evil desires, felt-needs, and habits. The point is, in being all-knowing, He knows how to work with each one of us.
 3. He also knows how to work with each of us because He, himself, has been tempted just like we are tempted. He has faced hardship, disappointment, rejection, false accusation, and many other things related to the harsher realities of life. Yet He always dealt with them in ways that were spiritually, emotionally, and mentally healthy.
 - a. The point is, Jesus knows everything and has personal experience in applying all He knows. Therefore, He is the right person to teach us what we need to know in order to live the life He offers.
 - b. And when we add His being all-powerful to His being all-knowing, we find that Jesus knows when and where we need His strength to do what we need to do in order to enjoy this kind of rest.
 4. But there is another reason to take Jesus' yoke upon us. He is **meek** (*same Greek word as is translated gentle*) and **humble in heart**.
 - a. It seems many do not like the word **meek** and the idea of meekness because in their way of thinking it requires them to be weak and vulnerable. Yet that way of thinking comes from the devil, and it is reinforced by the world.

- (1) God's way is meekness. Why? Because without meekness you will not love those around you in the same way and to the same degree that you want to be loved.
 - (2) Without meekness, you cannot learn the strength of faith required or gain the level of faith needed to stay yoked to Jesus when facing the harsher realities of life.
 - (3) For example, in moments of anxiety, frustration, anger, disappointment, and the like you will be tempted to abandon meekness, and if you abandon meekness, you will unyoke yourself from Jesus, turn from His ways, and pursue self-serving, self-protective, self-soothing, and therefore unloving solutions to whatever threatens your happiness and sense of well-being. We need meekness to live a loving, godly life.
- b. If we need meekness, what does it mean to be meek? To be meek is to accept, in a way that honestly acknowledges that you are being taken advantage of or mistreated without becoming ungodly or unloving in any way – either inwardly or outwardly. And when is meekness most necessary? When there are no godly options to do otherwise.
- (1) This is what Jesus did when on trial before the Chief Priest and then before Pilot. We read a description of Jesus' meekness in **1 Peter 2:21-23**, "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."
 - (2) Because there were no other godly options, Jesus accepted being taken advantage of and mistreated without becoming ungodly – either in mind and heart or in outward behavior.
 - (3) And because Jesus experienced first-hand what is required to remain meek in the face of painful and unjust suffering, He can teach us how to remain meek in similar situations.
 - (4) Of course, His teaching will include the importance of trusting God, obeying God, waiting patiently for God to act, and depending on God to bring good out of everything that is intended to harm us. Why? Because there can be no meekness without these, just as there can be no inward peaceful rest without meekness.
- c. Coupled with being meek, Jesus is also **humble in heart**. Rather than looking down on us and thinking "How could they?" He looks at us through compassionate, patient, tender, under-standing, and

even long-suffering eyes – and deals with us accordingly. Of course, the source of Jesus’ humble heart is just as important as His humble heart itself.

- (1) **Hebrews 5:8** says Jesus learned the personal cost of obedience through the things which He suffered. In my opinion, it is reasonable to assume that if Jesus learned the personal cost of obedience this way, He gained humility in heart in a similar way. In other words, Jesus He learned the hard way, which means He knows how tempting it is to take the easy way, and because He is humble in heart, He deals with us in gracious and extremely patient ways.
 - (2) Let me put it this way, a **proud** Jesus would be an impatient, harsh Jesus, whereas a **humble** Jesus is a compassionate, gracious, understanding, long-suffering Jesus.
 - (3) **Psalms 103:13-14** puts it this way, “Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. [14] For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”
5. It is this combination of Jesus’ meekness and humbleness of heart that so affects the way He deals with us that it makes His yoke easy and His burden light. In other words, Jesus’ yoke becomes easy to wear and light to bear, because of **how** He teaches and leads us to that place where we find rest for our soul – that is, an inwardly, peaceful rest that remains restful in the face of life’s harsher realities.

III. Conclusion

- A. Jesus invites each one of us to yoke ourselves to Him – not for rest from the harsh realities we face in everyday life, or from physical exhaustion, but from the recurring emotions, the overwhelming feelings, the obsessive thoughts, the oppressive anxiety, the irrational fears, the foolish beliefs, and the discouragement, despair, or even depression that result from our sin-sick, self-seeking ways of viewing the unpleasant, unwanted, harsher realities of life.
- B. These are the things that exhaust the soul, and it is from the exhaustion of our mind and emotions that Jesus wants to free us and teach us how to be at rest inwardly in spite of what is going on outwardly. It is my experience that in a sinful, messed up world, there is no better place to be, for when you have Jesus’ kind of inward peace, life is at its best.