

Rest For The Weary – Matthew 11:28-30

I. INTRODUCTION

²⁸ Come to Me, all you 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.”

A. *The Hindu Priest*

1. The Hindu priest's robe was becoming faded and since he would be speaking to many at the upcoming religious festival, he decided he ought to re-dye the garment.
2. So he went to the local vendor & bought some powdered dye.
3. When he unwrapped the package, he found some strange words on the wrapping paper; “Come unto me, and I will give you rest!” they said.
4. For days after, those words kept replaying in his mind, haunting & beckoning him.
5. What did they mean? And wasn't that what he'd been looking for, for years? Rest?
6. But try as he might, he couldn't find the source of the words and who'd made the invitation.
7. So he passed the paper to another priest who lived in a more populated region and asked him to find out where these words came from and what they meant.
8. The priest searched diligently to find out what the words meant. He carried that piece of paper around with him everyday, seizing every opportunity to ask folks if they knew anything about them.
9. Several months later, he came upon a group of Christians holding a service in the open air of his city.
 - a. he stopped to listen, and heard for the first time of One who could save from sin, and give new life.
 - b. one of those speaking to the crowd proclaim, “Jesus said, ‘COME UNTO ME, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST!’”
 - c. the priest was stunned – the words, the invitation had come from Christ.
 - d. and the rest He offered was from guilt, from fear, from all the things the priest struggled with.
10. So he pressed through the people who had gathered to listen to the Christians and showed them the paper and told them of how he'd received it.
11. That day, those believers led that Hindu priest to faith in Christ.
12. And several days later, he returned to his friend and fellow priest who'd given him the paper and led him to Jesus too.

B. *Anyone Weary?*

1. Anyone feel *weary* here today? Anyone *stressed out*?
2. This is the weekend before Thanksgiving and with this week we formally launch into that time of the year known as “*the Holidays.*”
 - a. it's *supposed* to be a time of fun & family.
 - b. a time of presents and tables laden with food,
 - c. it's supposed to be a time off work & school, and you'd think that means *rest*. But is it?
3. When you think of the holidays do you think of *rest*, or all the stuff you *have* to do?
 - a. there are dozens of presents to buy, special holiday parties to go to,
 - b. relatives to visit, a ton of cooking to do, school & church plays to attend.
4. Many would say the holidays are *high-stress days* and that they need a holiday *after* the holidays just to recover!

C. *Stress*

1. Time magazine's June 6, 1983 cover story called stress "The Epidemic of the Eighties" and

- referred to it as our leading health problem.
2. There can be little doubt that the situation has progressively *worsened* in the last 20 years.
 - a. numerous surveys confirm that adult Americans believe they are under much more stress than a decade or two ago.
 - b. a 1996 *Prevention* magazine survey found that almost 75% feel they have "great stress" one day a week with 1 out of 3 adults indicating they feel this way more than *twice* a week.
 - c. in 1983 only 55% said they felt under great stress on a weekly basis.
 - d. it's been estimated that 75-90 % of all visits to primary-care physicians are for stress related problems.
 3. Most stress today is *psychological* in nature as opposed to *physical*.
 4. But our bodies tend to react to stress the same way, no matter what its cause.
 - a. the heart rate and blood pressure soar to increase the flow of blood to the brain to improve decision making,
 - b. blood sugar rises to furnish more fuel for energy as the result of the breakdown of glycogen, fat and protein stores,
 - c. blood is diverted from the stomach to the large muscles of the arms and legs to provide more strength for combat, or greater speed in getting away from danger,
 - d. and adrenalin, the hormone which affects our heart-rate and a host of other body functions flows through our system wiring us for action.
 5. But since none of those physical needs are really necessary to deal with *modern* stress, the result is that our bodies get primed for action, but then don't have the release they need.
 - a. and we end up with a host of *medical* problems;
 - b. hypertension, strokes, heart-attacks, diabetes, ulcers, neck & low back pain.
 6. Anyone here wake up in the morning after 7 or 8 hours of sleep, still tired? That's often a sign of over-bearing stress.
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7. Jesus issued an invitation to the people of His day which is even *more* appealing today. It's an offer of *rest*.

II. TEXT

A. V. 28

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

1. The first year of Jesus' ministry is drawing to a close and people are beginning to be forced into taking a stand about Jesus.
2. Up to this point, He's been a *curiosity* because of the fresh message He proclaimed and the wonderful miracles He performed.
3. And up till now *everyone* has been interested in Him.
4. The common folk hoped Jesus would turn out to be the long hoped for Messiah, and the more miracles He did raise the sense of expectation and *talk* among them.
5. At this point, many have gone from wondering if He *might* be the Messiah, to openly saying He *was*.
6. At the same time, there were others moving in the opposite direction in their opinion of Jesus; they were moving toward opposition.
7. They came mostly from the ranks of the political & religious leaders of the day.
8. To them, Jesus posed a threat because He didn't fit in to *their* plans.
9. He overturned their comfortable little religious wagon, just as He'd overturned the money changers tables and animal pens in the temple.
10. At this point in Matthew's gospel, people are being brought to the place where they have to make a choice, a decision about Jesus, either *for* Him, or *against* Him.
11. So Jesus issues an invitation, one that will appeal only to those who sense a particular need – the need for rest, for peace, and an inner sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.
12. And notice what He invites them to – Himself!

- a. He doesn't invite them to a political party or agenda.
 - b. it isn't an invitation to a moral program.
 - c. nor is it to a religious group, a church, denomination, or sect.
 - d. He doesn't invite them to a philosophy
13. The invitation is "Come to ME!". He invites them to *Himself*, to a *relationship*.
14. It is He who will give them the rest they need.
- a. He is the answer to all their questions,
 - b. the solution to every need.
15. Once again there's something lost in the translation from Greek to English.
- a. what we don't find here is the sense of *urgency & tenderness* with which Jesus issued this invitation.
 - b. "Come" is a command, but it's given with a sense of tender urgency.
 - c. this is not the stern order of the owner of a pet who is calling it to him with the voice of authoritarian command – "Come here this instant!"
 - d. this is the tender call of a careful and concerned friend who can & wants to help.
 - e. this is the encouraging voice of a compassionate father who beckons the timid child who's fearful and hiding.
16. The invitation is directed to those who are hard at work, striving away under a great burden & the offer is rest.
17. Really, the invitation Jesus issues here is for *all people*, but the only one's to whom it will *appeal* are those who *realize* their need; to those who feel weighed down and tired.
- a. these are those who've faced that inner voice which says there must be some meaning, some larger purpose to life –
 - b. and they've sought for the answer in many places but not found it.
 - c. their quest for rest, for peace, for satisfaction has resulted in a life piled high with disappointments, obligations, and burdens.
18. You see, God made us for Himself, and as Augustine said, our souls are restless until they find their rest in Him.
- a. every man, woman and child who has ever lived was created by God and for God; He is the purpose and center of their being.
 - b. but the rebellion of the Fall has blinded us to this truth, and history is the sad story of man's attempt to reclaim his center, his purpose and lend something real to the meaning of his existence.
 - c. every one of us have an internal sense of our call to greatness, to some purpose larger than ourselves.
 - d. it's like a *hunger of the soul* we try to satisfy with all kinds of vain pursuits like materialism, romance, or the gaining of significance through the accumulation of earthly power and position.
 - e. it's like a *spiritual itch* we try to scratch with the counterfeits of religion & spiritual enlightenment.
19. But none of these are the answer. The answer is Jesus. He's the bread of life that satisfies the hunger of our soul.
- a. He's the fountain of living water who alone can slake our thirst for meaning.
 - b. only His hand can touch that place in us that yields peace, and brings rest.
 - c. He and He alone is our "Enough!"
20. Look at what He promised -
- Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**
- a. *if* we come – He **WILL** give us rest!
 - b. HE will give it; religion will not give it, things, possessions will not give it,
 - c. philosophical enlightenment will not give rest.
 - d. No – what we need – only Jesus can give, and *if* we come to Him, He **WILL** give it!

B. Vs. 29-30

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.

1. This may seem like a strange illustration for Jesus to use after just saying that rest was to be found in coming to Him.
2. A yoke speaks of work and sounds like a not-light burden.
3. If Jesus invites us to rest in Him, then why call us into a yoke?
4. A yoke was a piece of wood specially fitted to an ox's neck that would permit it to pull a burden, like a plow or wagon.
 - a. the production of yokes called for a skilled carpenter.
 - b. the wood had to be smooth lest it irritate the skin of the ox and create a sore.
 - c. it had to be exactly the right size and shape or it would press into the ox's bones and muscles and wound the animal.
 - d. then, since two oxen were used side by side, the distance between the neck holes had to be exactly the right space or the oxen would run into each other or be so far apart they would not keep pace with each other.
 - e. then the yoke would become misaligned on both their necks and create a terrible burden and pain for both.
5. When it was time to train a new ox in pulling the plow, the novice would always be teamed with a older, experienced and strong veteran.
 - a. for the new ox, the one thing it needed to learn was to simply stay in step with the elder, stronger ox.
 - b. the elder ox did all the work, pulling on the yoke. The other ox was simply there to keep pace and make sure the yoke did not misalign.
 - c. once the novice ox had learned to adapt its pace to the gait of the elder ox, then it could naturally lend it's own strength to the yoke and the burden would be *shared*; but the burden would seem light to each because of their combined strength and united purpose in sharing the yoke.

6. Those who've been going it alone in life, seeking to carry their own weight & the burden of living all on their own, Jesus invites to join Him in His yoke.
 - a. He is the elder, the strong one.
 - b. all we need do is learn to stay in step with Him.
 - c. it is His strength that will pull the burden of life.
 - d. our one goal, our single preoccupation is to go along at His side, following right with Him, not falling back or getting ahead, but learning by the sheer passage of time and life to live naturally in step with Him.
7. In that place, at Jesus' side, is rest and peace; that is what we are created for.
8. Jesus said,

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart

- a. Jesus is not a tough teacher and instructor as we enter His yoke.
 - b. He's not a Marine drill sergeant barking out orders.
 - c. He's not a power-hungry boss who pushes his way around, intimidating everyone.
 - d. as we enter His yoke and take our place at His side, He doesn't berate us for showing up late, and then hurl His contempt at us every time we get out of step with Him.
9. His is a lowly and humble heart, meaning, when we come to Jesus, He does not stand above us on some lofty spiritual plateau, calling down to us to hurry up and scale the cliffs to where He is.
 - a. He's not haughty and arrogant – with arms crossed in impatience while we struggle to ascend to Him.
 - b. His heart is filled with compassion with our brokenness and need.
 - c. He knows we could never rise to him, so He came down to us;
 - d. all the way down to our lowliness and then alongside us.
 10. When Jesus says, "Come to Me," He does not mean "Come UP to where I am."
 11. No – the invitation is from the One Who *came down*, Who made Himself of no reputation, and

took the form of a servant, so that he could **reach out**, not **down**, to lift us up and restore us to the glory and purpose that was our original destiny.

12. Jesus said,
My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
13. I am so thankful He said this because it reminds me that if I'm in step with Jesus, then life is as it's supposed to be.
- I'll be at rest, peace will govern my heart.
 - I'll be satisfied and fulfilled.
14. But, if I'm weary, frantic, filled with fear and anxiety – when the pressure's overwhelming and I'm feeling weighed down – guess what!
- I've slipped from His yoke into my own,
 - one I've mislabeled as His but is in fact one of my own devising!
15. Some years ago, when I was new to being a pastor, I unwisely allowed myself to take on far too many responsibilities, tasks, projects, counseling, studies, and stuff! Other's expectations & my own
- though I didn't know it at the time, I was quickly burning out.
 - but I thought I was just doing what a pastor was supposed to do, and that really, feeling overwhelmed was good!
 - isn't the pastor supposed to walk around with the weight of the world on his shoulders?
 - but the stress was starting to get to me and I knew I needed to seek out the help of an elder brother who could relate to what I was going through and called an older and more experienced pastor I respected.
 - we met for lunch and as I approached the table where he was already seated, he looked at me and smiled as I sat down, and then said, "Lance, you are about to burn out!"
 - now – I had not told him why I wanted to talk to him, I'd simply called and invited him to lunch.
 - but he could see it on my face – the weight, the load I was bearing.
 - he exhorted me to rethink my ministry and set aside anything I did not have absolute confidence was the Lord's mandate.
 - I was stunned he so quickly diagnosed my condition and knew he was probably giving good advice,
 - but inwardly I protested what he was saying – thinking that being overwhelmed was godly!
 - that's when the Spirit spoke to my heart – "**My** yoke is easy, **My** burden light. Lance, what you're carrying, I did **not** put on you! **You** put it on you! It's your yoke, not mine!"
16. Friend – Listen to it again – Jesus said –
My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
- His yoke, His way, His life, is easy.
 - His burden, His load, the work He calls us to is light.
 - "His yoke is easy, His burden is light."
 - say that with me.
17. One of the things that frustrates me so is when giving Biblical counsel to people, and showing them the way the Lord has said they ought to go and the way they ought to live – they will often say, "But it's so hard!"
18. Okay then – don't do it. Keep living the way you've been living and that's resulted in the distress you're currently feeling and moved you to seek counsel.
19. Listen – doing things the Lord's way, sharing His yoke is **NOT HARD!**
- Jesus said His yoke was **EASY** - it's all the other ways that are hard!
 - it's just that they **look easy** in the beginning – but they always end up being hard, bitter, and heavy.
 - God's way **seems** hard at first, but ends up being the right & easy way in the end.
 - some time ago, we needed to replace our kitchen faucet, so I went to the store and got a new one and prepared to install it.

- 1) when I opened the box, I found a thick instruction booklet,
 - 2) but why bother reading that when I can spend the time installing the faucet?
 - 3) so I went to work, turning off the water under the sink, and then tearing out the old faucet and putting the new one in.
 - 4) but it seems for everything I did, it didn't work as I'd hoped and I ended up having to refer to the instructions.
 - 5) I ended up reading every word of that instruction booklet by the time it was all over, and had to undo virtually every step of my own "easy" installation.
 - 6) besides that, if I'd turned off the main water valve, as the instructions said, I would have not had to scrape down the cabinet under the sink of water damaged wood and replace the shelf paper, and the musty smell that remains under there wouldn't be there!
 - e. by going the "easy" way at first, it turned in to the hard way.
 - f. if I had gone the *right* way at the first and read the instructions, it would have turned out to be the *truly easy* way to go.
20. This is the way most people go about life – they skip the instructions and the Instructor, and just go at it as seems easy – the way every else seems to be going – after all, how can so many be wrong?
- a. wide is the way, and broad is the gate that leads to destruction.
 - b. narrow is the gate and way that leads to life.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Come

1. What Jesus said then, He says today – "Come to Me."
2. What you are looking for is found in only one place – Jesus.
3. Him! Not a religion, a church, or a lifestyle.
4. It's about a relationship.
5. That relationship is what you were created for, and you will know nothing by endless hunger, thirst, and dissatisfaction until you come to Him.

B. Burdened?

1. Christian – does living the Christian life seem hard to you?
2. If it is, then may I suggest, what you've thought the Christian life is, *isn't!* Listen to Him again – **"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**
4. I don't know what you may have thought being a Christian meant, but what He means by it is nothing more nor less than you and He, loving & enjoying one another.