



Sermon – 10/15/2023
Daniel Patterson

Verses Covered

Matthew 11:25 - 30
Jeremiah 6:16

Well, good morning. Let me invite you to open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 11. Matthew 11. We'll be looking at verses 25 through 30 this morning. And if you're a guest with us, I just want to say a special word of welcome. It is so good to have you with us. And every morning we gather to do a number of things. But right now, we gather every week to open the Bible and work verse by verse through a passage of Scripture because we believe that these words are from God and they explain the story of the entire universe and also make sense of the little individual stories of our own lives. And this morning, we're going to be looking at a text in Matthew chapter 11 on the heels of eight weeks where we have been going through our NEXT Initiative. We've been talking about how we should go, how we should do, how we should give. And that's good because the reflex of the Gospel is action. It's go, it's give, it's sacrifice, it's take the Gospel to the nations. But we want to start, next week we'll be back in our series in Genesis. We want to take one week just to receive from God. Just to hear something from God. Not to, not to strive, not to do, but to see what has been done. And this passage that we see in Matthew chapter 11 is one of the most life-giving, one of the most comforting, one of the most welcoming passages in the entire Bible. So, let's take a look at it in Matthew chapter 11. Matthew writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

²⁵At 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; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All 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. ²⁸So come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This is God's word for us today.

So, I have a odd fascination. You see, there's a, there's a whole category of videos that you can find on YouTube or Instagram or TikTok. And I don't know what this says about me but I think they're amazing. They're called gym fails. I have the sense of humor of a five year old. Um it's where people try really unintelligent things in the gym and it, and when they fail spectacularly and when that gets caught on camera, I mean I just ugly laugh. But there's one thing better than seeing a gym fail on a screen and that seeing it in real life. And I remember that happened to me, that happened when I was in college and I was at the Rec Center and I was running on the treadmill one day. To be clear, I'm not the subject of this gym fail. I hear some of y'all laughing. I'm just the observer. Running on the treadmill and there's a girl running beside me who was capturing the attention of a lot of the males in the room. And there was this one guy who walked in and he immediately locked eyes with her. And you could just see it on his face. Just saying, "I'm going to shoot my shot." And here's the thing, I was looking at this guy and impressive is not the first word that you would use to describe him. You might have used words like slovenly or "frat-tastic" or maybe just gross. But here's the thing, he was dead set. And he walked over to the same area and I was looking at him and I'm just thinking, "I think your strut maybe writing checks that your gut can't quite cash." But hey, it didn't stop him. He was determined apparently to make his move to impress this girl. I don't know. So, he gets on the treadmill right on the other side of her but before he does that, he puts on a weight vest. And then he grabs some, some dumbbells. Clearly knows what women want. Turns the treadmill on. He starts doing bicep curls while walking on a treadmill. And just as an aside, ladies, if you're, if there's a guy walking beside you on a treadmill doing bicep curls while staring at you, he's not the one. But he puts those down after a minute and he decides, I'm really going to turn on the charm right now. So, he dials the treadmill up to this Olympic-level sprint. And it goes fine for about three seconds. But I'm looking at this guy and I'm thinking, "This is not an Olympic specimen here. I mean, he's running, huffing and puffing on all the grace of a three-legged hippo and the wheels are starting to come off. But he's still looking at this girl with this, how you doing kind of look. And as he does, about 15 seconds into his Usain Bolt-level sprint, his foot catches on the tread and I see his feet go flying and his face right into the tread. Which is bad enough but it keeps going because this very unathletic guy does one thing that's marginally athletic as this treadmill is going at ten, 11, 12 miles an hour. He somehow manages to do this sort of flop so his face doesn't get worn out by the tread. But he catches the arms of the treadmill so the tread is just wearing his back out and he doesn't have the presence of mind to just let go. So, he arches his back up. And then, while wearing these early two thousand eras baggy basketball shorts, the tread captures the hem, shoots his shorts 30 yards across the room until he finally has the presence of mind to just let go. And he does and he stands up and he takes the walk of shame across the room and he picks up his shorts and he keeps walking. And I'm pretty sure he entered the transfer portal because I never laid eyes on him for the rest of my life.

Now, my hope is that you've never experienced a fall or a fail anywhere close to that level of humiliating but what I am willing to bet is that you have experienced a moment of panic in your life where you felt like you couldn't bear the weight of the burdens that you're carrying. That you couldn't keep up with the speed of the pace of life and feel like you could keep holding it all together. And if that has ever been you, or if that's you this morning, then this passage is your relief. And what I want us to see is that these verses that we just read offer the secret of living life on this Earth. But the secret comes with a surprising twist. And that twist is that if you want to experience freedom from the weight of life, you find God's blessing by taking on Jesus's burden. And these verses tell you how to experience the good life according to Jesus. They show you how

to find the freedom and the rest and the joy that you're longing for. But for these verses to function properly in our lives, there's three things that we need to receive and three things that we need to do according to this text. So, if you're taking notes, the first thing I want to call our attention to is that this text tells us that we need to release our grip on self-reliance. Now, if you're looking at your Bible, your Bible probably bundles all of these six verses in one paragraph. But as you're reading these verses, sometimes the verses don't feel like they go together in exactly the same way. Mine bundles these altogether. But when you're reading these, it can be a bit confusing because the first three verses don't really have anything to do with the last three verses. The first three verses are, You are the father, You have this authority, You can do whatever You want, You're revealing, You're concealing, and the Son knows the Father and the Father knows the Son. And then the last three verses are about rest and joy and peace. And how do these two things mash up? I call this a biblical mullet. All business upfront in the three verses that we sort of got a party in the back. And how do these things stick together? Why are these verses packaged here? It's because a central aspect of Jesus' ministry was teaching people how to see the world the way God does. And what these verses are designed to do is retrain the way we see and reveal something shocking and staggering to us. So, what's it retraining us to do? It's training us to see the pattern of the world. So, where is that in these verses? Look at the start. Jesus is addressing God and He's praising God for concealing and revealing, for hiding the truth about Jesus from the wise and learned but revealing it, the Bible says, to little children. So the first thing that Jesus is doing is establishing the reality that God owes us nothing. He is free to reveal. He's free to conceal whatever He wants to whoever He wants, however He wants, whenever He wants. He is God and Jesus is praising the Father for who He is revealed the truth about Jesus to; to little children. And this isn't about size. It's not about age. It's about a heart posture. Because children are happy to rely on others. Children are happy to ask, to reach out, to freely admit their need. And in so doing, they're the opposite of what this text is point out, those people who are the wise and understanding in their own eyes. And to understand these verses, we have to understand how it's situated because this passage is sandwiched between two other passages in Matthew chapter 11 and then what comes later in Matthew chapter 12. And right before these verses Jesus denounces fiercely these unrepentant cities where He performed miracles. He says, woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida, Capernaum. If the miracles that were done in your town were done in Sodom, were done in Tyre, they would have repented. And it would be more bearable for you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement than it will be for you. And then right after these verses, Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees who are trying to entrap Him in a question about the Sabbath. And Jesus is saying, you don't even understand the law that you claim to be experts in. And Jesus is showing that those who rejected Him before this passage and after this passage were those who were the confident. Those who were self-reliant. Those who thought of themselves as clever. They were the human achievers. They felt superior. They had arrived in their jobs. They had arrived in their lives. And they looked at Jesus like He was this upstart prophet from a backwater town. And they thought if I get mixed up with you, I'll be the talk of the town. I'll lose my prestige. I'm not willing to give that up. But those who came to Jesus came to Him with needy hands and desperate hearts; like children. Those who came to Jesus were lowly. And the principle here is not that wise people or smart people or clever people can't be saved. Instead, these opening verses are trying to retrain our vision of how we look at the world to show us that the saving truth about Jesus will only take root in hearts of those who are willing to cry out in need, who are willing to be taught, who are willing to follow. The Father reveals Himself to the lowly. And that's important because this isn't just about the beginning of the Christian life for people thousands of years ago, it's about you now. This passage stirs us to remember, remember that you and I are

little children in need of Jesus. Because it's so easy to go through this life a little embarrassed of the ways of Jesus. It's so easy to feel like you maybe on an island at school or on the campus or at the workplace. And it's so much easier not to stand out by being distinctively Christian but just to fall back and fit in. It's so easy for us to justify the sinful things that we want to do. There's gratification just to click away. My test score could be a little bit higher if my eyes wandered. My income could be a little bit higher if I fudge this just a little bit. And you see, behind nearly every sin, satan is whispering into your ear, you deserve this. And when that happens and when you listen to that voice, functionally you are saying, I know better than God. And when you do, you are acting in precisely the same manner as those in this text from whom God hides His very presence. The wise and the understanding who were so clever that they didn't need God. So, the message coming to you this morning is release your grip on this sinful self-reliance and let go of moving through life in your own power. God's blessing and His presence comes to those who are willing to receive, willing to follow, willing to be taught. It comes to the lowly. But it doesn't, this passage doesn't just say stop it, this passage also says, come and see.

And that's why the second thing that we need to do this morning as we look at this text, that this text calls us to, is to admire, admire the beauty of Jesus's humble heart. And when we look at verse 27 and 28, we see in these two verses, this staggering claim and then an absolutely stunning prophet promise. And it hits us right out of the gate in verse 27 because Jesus has opened with this sweeping statement. God, you have the authority. You are right. You hide. You reveal. You are Lord of heaven and earth. And then He says, "So am I." This is shocking to those who heard this statement for the first time. Verse 27 says, all things have been handed over to me. Jesus says and He refers to Himself as the divine Son for the very first time in Scripture. And He says, no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. Jesus is saying, the same thing I just said about God, His power, His prerogative, it's true, Me too. And this is a staggering, all-encompassing, earth-shattering claim to the people who would have heard this for the very first time. And if you follow the passage, if you follow the logic of what's been going on in Scripture for over the last chapter to up to this point, it is absolutely crushing. It just builds and builds. Just think about the flow of what's going and what's coming. Woe to you, Capernaum. Woe to you Chorazin. Woe to you Bethsaida. And think about what's coming after. You think you're so clever. You don't need to listen to me. I come to towns and perform miracles and you reject Me like a second class magician. But you know what? I have the power to judge. I have the power to reveal. And it will be worse for you on the day of judgement than even Sodom. You will wish that you might never have even been born. You could expect that Jesus is about to just unload fury on His listeners. But what does he say? He says, "Come, come to Me." He doesn't come in judgement. He says, "Come. All who are weary and find rest. Find rest for your souls." And what we see is something stunning and beautiful that the almighty powerful God of the universe is astonishingly gentle. And He comes in with a message that touches nearly every single one of us. He addresses all of those who labor. And that means, if you're working, if you're striving, if you're trying to figure out how to make it in this world, that can be hard and cold and cruel. He says, "Come to me" to all of you who are heavy laden. And that language means that if you find yourself in a situation when you're weighed down by the problems and the pressures of the world, something that's outside of your control; addiction, anxiety, illness, poverty, grief, stress. Jesus says, "Come to Me." But how? Jesus answers that in verse 29. He says, "I can give you rest because I am gentle." And as one writer says, that means Jesus is not easily exasperated. It means that Jesus isn't trigger happy with you. Jesus' most natural posture is understanding and compassion. And Jesus says, "I am lowly." And that means that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son

of God, resonates most closely with people who are downcast. He is the one who knows what it is like to be destitute. He is the one who knows what it is like to be rejected not just by a peer group but by the entire world. And He reaches out to all of those who feel burdened. So, in these verses, we have an answer to the question, what is Jesus like at His inmost being? What is He like at His very core? And the answer from these verses as to what Jesus is like at His deepest, at His most truest is that He is gentle, He is lowly, He is compassionate, He is tender, He is accessible, and He's issuing an invitation to you. Come and I will give you rest. And some of you need to hear this because these verses mean that when Jesus sees your anguish and He sees your doubt and He sees your anxiety, His most natural reflex is to move toward you in compassion and in care. Paul says that Jesus is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. And these verses are helping us to unlearn what sin causes us to think about God. In our brokenness, since the Garden of Eden, Satan has been trying to get us to see God as angry, as distant, as dissatisfied with us. So, we move through life with the wrong kind of fear about God. But we also move through life with a fear of man, walking around thinking if someone really knew me they would reject me. But friends, here's the news. Jesus does know you. He knows you. He knows what you've done. He knows it even better than you do and He still desires your presence. He still desires you. And He says, "Come." And that's the invitation that's being given to every one of us. Because very few of us feel like we have it all together, do we? Some of you may be here this morning because you feel bad about what you did last night. Some of you may be here this morning and you may be thinking I need to, I need to get my act together. I need to clean myself up before I before I try and get right with God. Some of us may just be feeling crazed with stress or wracked with guilt or just walking through life with a sort of quiet desperation wondering if everything's just going to work out. There's good news for you. Because this passage tells us that the prayers that God answers come from people who approach the throne of grace, not with the swagger of self-reliance but those who come with the limp of loneliness. And if you're carrying a burden this morning, that's good news. Because it means you are precisely the kind of person that Jesus gravitates toward most naturally. Because He is gentle and lowly and He's inviting you to see Him as He actually is.

But we don't stop there. We don't just release. We don't just admire. There's one more thing this text calls us to do. And that is to embrace. Embrace the guidance of Jesus's gentle rule. And we see this reality in the final two verses of the passage. And in it we find something that's paradoxical, that's very counterintuitive. But it's something that reveals the actual secret to life and rest and joy and freedom. So, what is it that seems counterintuitive? Jesus has been saying, "Come to me. I will give you rest. I am gentle. I am lowly. Come find freedom." But then He says, "Take my yoke and learn. Take this burden upon yourself." And this yoke, a yoke is an agricultural image. And a yoke is a wooden beam that you put on a pair of oxen to harness them together to pull a plow or to pull a cart. And part of the reason why this may be confusing is precisely because we've just been talking about rest from labor and weariness and from people who are heavy laden. And here Jesus is saying, put on this yoke, which is an instrument of labor. And Jesus is offering freedom. But wearing a yoke implies that you're in submission. If you're wearing a yoke, are you receiving rest from labor or not? Are you being rescued from captivity or not? What is Jesus doing? Jesus is showing us how to live in this world. Jesus is talking about a yoke to show you that to find freedom, you need to be obedient to the right kind of master. He's giving us this image of a yoke to show us that if we're to find the good life, we needed to be guided along the right path. And Jesus is a master of using the language of the Old Testament, weaving it into the way He naturally speaks to demonstrate His point. And He's doing that in this verse in

a way that is unmistakable. The passage says that He's saying, you will find rest for your souls. And that is a quotation of the book of Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter 6. And let's look at what that verse says there. It says,

¹⁶“Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.

Jesus is using that exact language to tie this command back to the ancient promises given to Israel. And He's offering you the good way. He's offering you the good life now and forever. And He's showing you that you can't do it in your own power. You need someone to guide you down those ancient paths. So, here's the question. Do you want to know the secret of freedom and joy and rest and the good life according to Jesus? Here it is. Jesus says, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me.” The freedom and rest that we long for can only be found in submission to a good and gentle God. So, you could say that this passage in many respects sums up the message of the entire New Testament and it does so in a math problem. It essentially says, submission plus discipline equals freedom. Submission plus discipline equals freedom. And that makes zero sense on first blush, does it? But that's precisely what Jesus is saying when He's telling you to take on His yoke and learn from Him. Because an unharnessed ox will wander off, and so will you. And so will I. In our sin, we crave the freedom to do whatever we want, whenever we want, and however we want. But that way leads to disaster. There is no life to be found there. All that will lead you to is the slavery to the cruel master of addiction or appetite or ambition. And if you want to find life, if you want to find joy, if you want to find rest, you need to walk the rows. You need to walk the fields. You need to walk the paths that Jesus Christ puts you on. You see, the freedom that we long for comes only through submission to a good Father, to a loving Father. And the good life that we pine for is found only in becoming a disciple of Jesus, following after His wisdom and following after His ways. But here's the best part. Jesus says, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” And that's a promise. When you take on Jesus's burden, you find rest. When you submit to Jesus' constraints, you find that they aren't burdensome. They're actually life giving. And when you go through life in your own power, every stress you take on pushes you down. Every pressure that you take on pushes you further. Every problem, every pain, every dilemma pushes you further and further down and moving through life in your own power will slowly but surely crush you. So, Jesus says, take on My weight. Take on My yoke and the yoke that he gives is light. It's counterintuitive that you could take on weight. But the yoke that Jesus gives is like a life jacket. When you're drowning and you put on a life jacket, you take on weight, but that weight causes you to rise. The constraints that Jesus putting upon you, the life that He's asking you to live doesn't push you down but it raises you up and it gives you the life that you're looking for. One of the early church fathers 1,500 years ago, a man named Augustine, said that the yoke that Jesus is asking us to take on is like feathers to a bird. Yes, feathers add weight to the bird but those feathers caused the bird and free it to fly. That's what is going on in this passage. That's the secret to finding the good life. You find rest by taking on a burden. You find life by dying to self. You find freedom through obedience to a good and loving and gentle Father who is saying to you, “Come.” Submission plus discipline equals freedom.

And that's why Jesus is giving us this image of a yoke, of a servant with a piece of wood, harnessed to it, bearing a burden, walking a path. Jesus is giving you this image to remind us that He was also harnessed to a piece of wood. That He also bore a burden on your behalf. That He also walked a path that you couldn't walk. And He took on death to offer you life. And He addresses

you now from the loftiness of heaven with the lowliness of heart. And He says to you, Come. Come out of the storm and find safety.” So, the question becomes, are you willing? Are you willing to submit and be guided by Jesus? Every other pathway leads to disaster. And for some of you, that may mean submitting to Jesus as Lord and Savior for the very first time, turning away from your sin and trusting in Jesus. A loving Father is calling you home right now and He's saying, “Come.” But some of you are stuck in sin. You're following after Jesus but you're stuck in a sin that you just can't shake and deep down, you're wondering is God's patience wearing thin with me? And to you, Jesus is saying, “I'm gentle. I'm lowly. I will never tire of you.” And many yokes have room for two. Harnessing two oxen together and Jesus will meet you in your loneliness and guide you through. So, keep pressing on. And all of us, all of us need to hear the hope in this passage because Jesus is calling us to embody a way of life to become an apprentice of Jesus in every aspect of our existence. And that means taking on His burden. But that burden gives you life. You will never reach the end of the goodness of God's mercy as you're following after Him. The return on the investment of your obedience will never disappoint because Jesus is gentle and lowly and the burden that he gives, gives you the life that you actually should and seek and will find the most satisfying. The message of this passage is that you find the blessing of God by taking on the burdens of Jesus. So, don't wear yourselves out running through life in your own power on the treadmill of life that will only lead you nowhere. Instead, walk the paths that Jesus lays out for you. Because the way of the cross leads home.

Let's pray.

God, we ask You in the name of Jesus, that the Holy Spirit would seal, seal this word upon our hearts. Let us rest in the reality that You never tire of renewing our souls. We ask that the Spirit would move in the hearts of any who do not yet know Jesus. And to any who are living in their own strength, apart from You, let them see that You are their only hope. Let them see their current way as a way that cannot and will not save. Make your offer of grace and redemption and mercy and rest in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus real to them. For those of us who do trust in You though, God, we pray that You would let our time together renew our hope for Your return, to revive our hearts in the light of the truth that the night has been won and we will overcome, not in our own power but through Jesus Christ, our Lord and our King. And it is in His name that we pray. Amen.