

Learn from Jesus

Matthew 11:25-30

Intro

I came across a story of two men who were out on a boat in the Dead Sea. Somehow the boat capsized and one of the guys didn't know how to swim. He began to panic and frantically tried to swim and keep afloat. The other guy who knew that the Dead Sea was buoyant and told his friend to relax and let the salty water carry him along. So his friend stopped struggling and to his amazement he began to float.

Many people, especially religious people try to earn God's approval and favour through works, great effort and struggle. They are weighed down with legal do's and don'ts and then they feel guilt, frustration and dissatisfaction. It's called legalism.

In this passage of Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus speaks to people who were desperately trying to earn God's approval and desperately trying to be good through their own works. There were people who were finding the religious system and tasks impossible and who were driven to weariness and despair because of it.

Jesus in essence was saying, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Then come to me."

Verse 28, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*"

"Come to me"

To come is to believe in Christ and of submitting to His Lordship.

Jesus declared "*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty*" (John 6:35).

Coming to Christ is to believe in Him and to receive Him.

"All who are weary"

"Weary" carries the idea of working to the point of utter exhaustion.

It refers figuratively to arduous toil in seeking to please God based on human effort and by one's own works.

Jesus calls to Himself everyone who is exhausted from trying to find and please God in his or her own resources. He calls those who are exhausted from trying to earn salvation and who have despaired in trying to achieve God's standard of righteousness by their own efforts.

*W.B. Yeats, the great Irish poet wrote: "Can one reach God by toil? He gives himself to the pure in heart. He asks nothing but our attention."

The way to really know God is not by mental exertion, but by giving attention to Jesus Christ, for in Him we see what God is like.

"And burdened" This is translated in a perfect passive participle, indicating that at some time in the past a great load was dumped on a wearied person.

It suggests the external burdens caused by the futile efforts of one's own works of righteousness, or of doing good by self effort.

*In Jesus' time, the rabbinical teachings had become so massive, demanding and all-encompassing that they prescribed standards and formulas for virtually every human activity. It was all but impossible to learn all the traditions and codes and to keep them.

For the orthodox Jew religion was a thing of burdens.

Jesus spoke of the heavy loads of the Scribes and Pharisees which they laid on people's shoulders. In Matthew 23:2-4 Jesus says, "*The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*"

To the Jew religion was a thing of endless rules. A person lived their life in a barrage of regulations which dictated every action of their life. One would have to listen for ever to a voice which said, "Thou shalt not."

Peter at the Jerusalem Council noted that the Judaizers were trying to saddle Christianity with the same man-made religious burden. Peter said: "*Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are*" (Acts 15:10-11).

The weariness that Jesus is talking about refers to our utter exhaustion from trying to do everything ourselves; it is working ourselves to total exhaustion, to the point where we cannot do one more thing. It is being utterly bone tired. It is to the point where we are mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually worn out, there is nothing left in us to do anything.

We are wearied and burdened in trying on our own to find and please God by our own resources; we are exhausted in trying to find divine truth through human reasoning and human wisdom; we have exhausted ourselves in trying to earn salvation by our own power; and we have come to despair of ever being able to achieving God's standard of righteousness by our own efforts.

*Jesus is basically saying, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Then come to me. And if you come to me, I'll give you rest."

"***And I will give you rest***" means to refresh or revive, as from labour. Jesus is saying, "Get away with me and you will recover your life. Jesus promises rest to everyone who comes to Him. Enter into God's rest, that is, His salvation.

Rest means:

*1/ Cessation from labour or exertion. In a similar way, to enter God's rest is to cease from all human efforts.

2/ Rest is described as freedom from that which wearies or disturbs a person. Jesus' rest does not rob us from peace and joy.

3/ Finally, rest is described as leaning, or depending on Christ. We depend with utter certainty that Christ will supply all our needs.

Philippians 4:19 "*And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*"

Verse 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.***"

Take my yoke"

A yoke was made of wood curved to fit the neck and shoulders of a particular animal.

The yoke was a harness to pull a cart, a plow or any agricultural implement.

*In the culture in which Jesus lived different rabbis would have different rules and regulations of what was permitted and forbidden. That set of rules was called the rabbis "yoke".

When a disciple decided to follow a certain rabbi, he chose to do so because he believed that the rabbi's interpretations of the Scripture was to be accurate, thus they were taking up that rabbi's yoke. Jesus jumped all over the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law because of the yoke that they placed on people was burdensome and difficult.
But Jesus says, "Take my yoke."

Jesus adds "***Learn from me.***"

His burden is light, not like the religious leaders who burdened the religious people of Jesus' day with a grievous legalism.

Christ will never oppress us or give us a burden too heavy to carry. His yoke has nothing to do with the demands of works, laws, or regulations.

In 1 John 5:3 we read, "*This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*"

"For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

*Charles Spurgeon said "The message of our gospel is the gentle word, "come." Our Lord says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." The law says, 'Go and do.' The law says, "Go and take heed to your path in which you walk. Break the commandments and perish; "keep them and live." The law drives men with a whip; Christ draws men with bands of love. The law repels; the gospel attracts. Christ is the good shepherd who goes before His sheep and says, "Come, I will give you rest."

Verse 30, "*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"

When we take the yoke from Jesus we do not bear that yoke alone but we are yoked together with Jesus and He actually carries us. It is He that gives us the strength and the power to live a godly life. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit.

*I like what J.H. Jowett said about Christ's yoke:

"The fatal mistake for the believer is to seek to bear life's load in a single collar. God never intended man to carry his burden alone. Christ therefore deals only in yokes! A yoke is a neck harness for two, and the Lord Himself pleads to be one of the two. He wants to share the labour of any galling task. The secret of peace and victory in the Christian life is found in putting off the taxing collar of "self" and accepting the Master's relaxing "yoke.""

***Abraham Lincoln & Slave Girl Story**

There's a story that Abraham Lincoln went to a slave market one time, and was moved with compassion to place a bid on a young black girl. He won the bid and walked away with the young girl. There was a sullen, angry expression on the girl's face, because she knew that here was another white man who had bought her and would abuse her. As they walked away from the slave block, however, Lincoln told the girl, "You are free."

"What does that mean?" she demanded. "It means, you are free."

"Does that mean that I can be what I want to be?" "Yes--you can be whatever you want to be." "Does that mean that I can say what I want to say?" "Yes--you can say whatever you want to say."

"Does that mean that I can go where I want to go?" "Yes--you can go wherever you want to go."

"Then ..." the girl said, "... I'll go with you."

Submission to Christ brings the greatest liberation a person can experience - actually the only true liberation!

Conclusion

*One day a man went by to see a farmer who was plowing his field with a team of oxen. The man noticed that one of the animals was seemingly a little bigger than the other so he asked him about it. The response from the farmer was very interesting. He said that the big animal was an older animal that was well trained and the smaller one was a young animal that was new to the yoke. The man went on to inquire as to why he put them together and this is the answer that He got,

“Well you see, it’s like this. That older ox is the best ox that I have ever had; he knows his way around the field. The reason I put the younger one with him is so the older, more knowledgeable ox could teach him how to plow. If I never put them together the younger one would never learn. By himself the younger ox would pull himself to death, but together he learns to cooperate with and rest in the strength of the older ox.”

Does your life feel like the ox whose pulling himself to death. Rest comes from obedience to Jesus’ commands. COME to Me, TAKE My yoke upon you, LEARN from Me.

Jesus is saying to you and me, “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy on you. Keep company with Me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matthew 11:28-30 The Message, by Eugene Peterson).