

Focus Text

“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; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 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. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’”

(Matthew 11:25–30, ESV)

1. Revelation

“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; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.’”

(Matthew 11:25–26, ESV)

Jesus moves from the rebuke of places that haven’t repented to a public prayer of thanksgiving. Jesus is thankful that there are those, despite the public rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, God has revealed Jesus’ identity to ‘infants.’ These little ones are assumed to be poor and unnoticed Jews who had made it known that Jesus is Lord. Matthew’s Gospel explores this concept. The Gentiles, the outcasts, the demons, and the infirm quickly notice Jesus’ status as the spiritual King. However, the scribes and Pharisees reject Jesus’ status and teaching and have openly maligned Jesus, calling Him the prince of demons. Matthew draws our attention to the paradox of Jesus’ ministry: the lowly of society are wise in seeking the King, while those in authority are blind to Jesus’ status.

“To be wise and understanding is not negative here; nor are we to understand that all wise and understanding people are automatically excluded from insight. Similarly, to be an infant is not actually commended. The point is that, while infants are not normally able to understand matters of any complexity, here there are infants who are supernaturally endowed with insight.”¹

¹ Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

2. Relationship

"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." (**Matthew 11:27, ESV**)

There are two significant developments here. First, Jesus is once again making a divinity statement with His relationship with the Father. The two operate together in an exclusive way that others cannot. The Trinity works together in perfect harmony but remains distinct from creation. Even when we are all in Heaven, we will not become a part of God; He is unique to Himself. Jesus, as the second member of the Trinity, knows God perfectly, and God knows Jesus's will perfectly. There's a harmony in the Trinity that is beautiful to behold.

Secondly, in reference to the last verse, Jesus' mission to bring the Kingdom of Heaven requires spiritual sight. Jesus desires that the communities would repent and celebrate with Him, yet until now, only the tax collectors and Gentiles (sinners) have seen and celebrated Jesus.

We must begin with prayer for those in our lives. For anyone to see Jesus as the King of Kings, they must view Jesus through spiritual eyes. If you are hoping someone in your life will come to a saving knowledge of Christ, step one is to pray that their spiritual eyes would be opened. Jesus came to call all people to Himself. Everyone can see Jesus, but they have to view Christ through a spiritual lens. Throughout history, hundreds if not thousands of atheists have read the same bible you carry and claim with boldness that there is no God. Because they only desire to see the world in the physical sense. However, God will reveal Himself to anyone who comes searching if they look for Christ in humility.

"To know God is to know his ways and his judgments and to experience him at work. What is expressed here in knowledge-of-God language is closely related to what is elsewhere expressed in kingdom-of-heaven/God language. The ultimate significance of the will of the Son is being set on a par with that of the will of the Father in vv. 25-26.⁸⁵"²

² 85 In concrete terms this has been anticipated in Mt. 8:2-3.

3. Rest & Renewal

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

(Matthew 11:28–30, ESV)

Finally, Jesus recalls Israel's sin as recounted by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah accused the people of refusing to walk in the ways of the Lord that give them rest, and instead enacting God's judgment, just as the earlier communities that had rejected Jesus and called Him a drunk and a glutton. Jesus has come to fulfill the Law of Moses and invites His followers into the New Covenant, in which the law is written on their hearts. To follow a rabbi was to bear the yoke of their teachings, and the more strict a rabbi, the heavier the yoke. Jesus offers the audience an alternative to the heavy yoke of rules: follow the Messiah and celebrate the coming of God's Kingdom. Jesus adhered to a strict moral code, similar to that of the Orthodox rabbis of His time. Jesus does not condone sin, but He argues that following Him rather than the laws alone will prove life-giving, and that His followers become members of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Why? Because Jesus will be the one to empower His followers, He is the one who reveals the Father to them. If we follow Paul's logic in Romans, all of humanity is guilty of sin, and not one single person is free from falling short of God's law. Imagine trying to play a game you can never win. God never intended for people to walk alone; He wanted to be their God, and we would be His people. Jesus is the revelation of God's desired relationship with humanity. God would supply everything His people needed, and restore them when they sinned against Him. But as we learned, they have rejected Jesus as the Messiah because they aren't walking with God. Jewish leaders were trying to convince people they could receive God's blessings by working hard, never to offend the Torah. Yet, God intended to always care for His people if they would follow Him in humility. Jesus calls people to a life of relationship with God, rather than to a contract of human works that could never appease God.

"Thus says the Lord: "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. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" **(Jeremiah 6:16, ESV)**

“Jesus equates the Christian life with spiritual rest. In describing his provision of this rest, Jesus borrows imagery from the plowing of fields. Like the yoke that couples oxen together, discipleship does not exempt one from work but makes it manageable. Jews commonly spoke of taking on the yoke of the Torah to refer to the acceptance of the stipulations of the law. But, as the Sermon on the Mount has made plain, Jesus calls people not to the law but to himself.”³

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” **(Romans 3:23, ESV)**

Application

This week is Christmas! Instead of panicking over who’s bringing ham, or what gifts you may or may not have forgotten, celebrate. Christmas is about Jesus coming to earth to bring the Kingdom of God. Show your family what it looks like to walk around in the freedom of Christ, because it’s a joy to serve Him. His burden is easy and light! Amen.

³ Blomberg, Craig. 1992. Matthew. Vol. 22. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.