KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 11:25-30

Week of 8th to 14th of October

The Great Invitation to Salvation Rest

Leader Preparation

Read through the passage so that you are familiar with it. Read through the material on pages 29-30 of the CG leader manual. It will not be possible to discuss all of the questions! Focus on those most relevant to your group in the discussion time.

Last week ended with the confirmation to John the Baptist that Jesus is the Messiah. There was also a strong warning to those who had seen Jesus' miracles, the signs of the Kingdom of Heaven, but chose not to put their trust in him. The sermon will focus on verses 28 to 30, Jesus' invitation to sinners to repent, and his challenge to believers to a greater commitment to growing in him. This may be a great opportunity for someone in your group to make a first or renewed commitment to follow Jesus.

Spend some time praying for the members of your group, and asking God to guide you as you lead your time together.

Group time

Getting to know you:

Ask your group members to share something about themselves:

- What is one tradition in your family?
- Can you think of a time of rest that completely refreshed you?
- What is something that brings you real peace?.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 11:25-27 (spend less time on this section – the text box is more for leader understanding than a long discussion)

In the previous study, we focused on how Jesus confirmed to John the Baptist that he is the Messiah – and pointed out the evidence by his miracles and actions that the Kingdom of God was dawning. Then Jesus denounced the people of Israel who had so much evidence available to them, and yet chose not to trust him.

vs 25:

Who do you think Jesus is talking about as the "wise and learned"?

- Did these people find it easy to trust and follow Jesus? Why / why not?

And who would the "little children" be? (See also Matthew 5:3, Matthew 18:1-4)

- Did these people find it easy to trust and follow Jesus? Why / why not?

Vs 26-27:

How does this prayer paint a picture of the relationship of the Father and the Son? From these verses, how do people reach the point of being able to follow Jesus?

Verses 26-27: Is God being unfair?

This Scripture doesn't specify whether God is taking extra steps to hide things, or whether he simply chooses not to overcome a person's own arrogant, willful ignorance. Earlier, Jesus criticized the attitude some people had, where no matter what they saw, they would simply demand the opposite (Matthew 11:16–19).

Scripture gives examples of God allowing people to make free choices magnifying their stubbornness in order to make an example. The Pharaoh who initially refused to allow Israel to leave Egypt (Exodus 7:22; 8:15,32) was later punished by God actively hardening his heart (Exodus 9:12;10:20;14:8).

In either case, "fairness" is not the issue. A major factor is humility. Those who reject the evidence God gives are not being sincere (Romans 1:18–20). Children express trust based on what they see and are told. Adults often manipulate their own thoughts to protect their preferences. God's will is "gracious," according to Jesus. Since all people are sinners (Romans 3:10), nobody deserves good from God. That He reveals Himself to anyone, at all, is an act of grace on His part. The fact that anyone would see His power on display—as did many in Israel—and still refuse to believe is an act of foolish arrogance.

Excerpts from https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/11/Matthew-11-26.html

READ Matthew 11:28-30 (spend more time on this section)

Weighed down

What are some of the things in your life that make you feel weary? What of the things that you have taken on feel like heavy burdens?

Thinking about the "wise and learned" in verse 25, how might they have felt weary and burdened? What could have made the "little children" less burdened?

Are there any of your burdens that perhaps God didn't intend you to carry?

- Are you taking responsibility for your salvation rather than relying on Jesus' gift?
- Are there things that you do out of duty that perhaps are not meant for you?

Released

- What is a yoke? – would you expect putting a yoke on to be a new burden, or to lighten the load? Can you think of a time when sharing the load lifted a burden from you?
- How does the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven release you from your burdens?
- How good are you at learning from others? What are some qualities that make you "teachable"? How does it help if your teacher is "gentle and humble in heart"
- Think of 2 things you could do to walk a little more patiently beside Jesus and to learn from him.

The paradox

- Matthew 10:39 introduced us to one of the paradoxes presented by Jesus: "Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."
- Is a yoke supposed to feel easy as we carry it? Is something really a burden if it feels light?
- What is a burden that you would like to hand over to Jesus so that you can experience rest?

Prayer

Today, try to spend some time in prayer more focused on responding to God than dealing with requests. You may like to use the four part form of prayer taught by Martin Luther (from Tim Keller's book, "Prayer – Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God").

Based on the text we have read:

- What does the passage instruct us to believe or do?
- How does the passage lead us to praise and thank God?
- How does this lead us to confess and repent of sin?
- Knowing all this, what should we request from God?