

The Yoke of Jesus

Preached: 5/2/2021, Germantown;

Scripture

Matthew 11:20-30

Jesus' calling to us is a calling to a life of **discipleship**. A **disciple** is someone who has **responded to His call** to turn from our previous way of living in order to live **our life under His authority**. We talked about that last week. In Micah 6:8, the prophet tells us what God expects of us: **To Do Justice, to Love Kindness and to Walk humbly with our God**. To walk with God is not a part time calling. Every moment of our life is to be under his direction. The life of a disciple is to be a fruitful life – fisher of men; a fruit bearing life. The call to discipleship is not an easy calling. But it is **much easier and more rewarding** than to reject His invitation to be His follower. We sometimes hear or imagine that living a life in rebellion to God is fun-loving and carefree. But in actuality it is not. Dallas Willard writes:

To depart from righteousness is to choose a life of crushing burdens failures, and disappointments, a life caught in the toils of endless problems that are never resolved. The "cost of discipleship" is small when compared to the lot of those who don't accept Christ's invitation to be a part of His company in The Way of Life" (pg. 2)

I want to look today at this invitation that Jesus speaks in Matthew 11:28-30. At first reading it appears to be difficult to understand. Jesus seems to be suggesting that following him is too difficult. It does not sound appealing. He invites us to take a yoke and to learn. We would rather that following Jesus be easy and effortless. But what Jesus wants us to understand is that even though His way involves a yoke, a burden, it is easier and more rewarding than any other way.

As the passage begins, Jesus is rebuking those who have not responded to His invitation. Jesus has ministered in these areas. He has performed miracles. They have seen his power. But they have stubbornly resisted submitting to Him. He compares them to some cities that we read about in the Old Testament. Cities that were notoriously evil – Tyre, Sidon, Sodom. Jesus says that if these evil cities would have seen the power of God that Jesus has displayed in His day, the people would have turned from them sin and repented.

Jesus refers to those who have been resisting him as the "wise and learned" (verse 25). This is an obvious reference to the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day. The religious leaders have devoted themselves to the study of Scripture. They know the Scripture. They seem to be "know it all's". But they have missed the significance of what they have learned. And they have looked down on Jesus and his followers those who are unlearned and uneducated. In contrast with the "wise and learned" it is those who have become like little children who have responded to his call. And Jesus is grateful for those who have responded to Him. Jesus taught that those who wish to be a part of His kingdom, must become like little children. Trusting, willing to accept what they are told.

As Jesus continues, he affirms that he is the only legitimate source of revelation about God. The Religious leaders believed that they were the only ones who were able to understand God and teach others about Him. But Jesus declares that He is the one who knows God because He is the Son and God is His Father. Now here is where the gospel that we believe gets us into trouble in our world. We insist that Jesus is the only way, the only source of truth about God. There is not other way. The world would like for us to believe that there are many ways to a relationship with God. The pressure from our culture causes many people to compromise about the truth of the gospel. But the Bible is clear on this point. Jesus says, **"No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."**

This is an important point for us to understand. If what Jesus tells us in this verse is true, then we must tell others about Jesus and encourage them to be followers of Him. We are not very compassionate people if we allow people to believe lies and do not try to persuade them of the truth.

This brings us to the invitation of verses 28 – 30. To all those who have looked elsewhere for eternal life, Jesus says, **“Come”** It is a calling that is spoken with some force and authority. “Come here! Listen to what I am offering.”

To whom is the Invitation spoken: Jesus invites those who are weary and burdened. He is speaking to all who have looked elsewhere, thinking there was another way to find what we are looking for. As people search for the truth, they can become weary and burdened. He is speaking to those who have tired themselves out.

Jesus is also calling to those who have been beaten down and burdened by others. Throughout His ministry Jesus has had many discussions with the religious leaders. Jesus has exposed their hypocrisy. He has rebuked them for their legalism – thinking that the only way to come into relationship with God was through out good works. But Jesus has emphasized that God desires people who love Him and who have faith. The religious leaders have wore people out with their legalistic demands.

One time Jesus said to them: ⁴⁶ ***“And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. (Luke 11:46).***

The invitation that Jesus speaks is to those who have been seeking for a relationship with God. People who have longed to have peace with God. People who have longed to experience the joy of forgiveness of sins. People who have a longing for the assurance of eternal life. To those who have tried to find peace with God, the comfort of being at rest with God, Jesus invites you to Come to Him.

What does it mean to come to Him? **Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me.** We are to be committed to learn from Him, to learn His way. The yoke is a yoke of slavery. The yoke is a wooden bar that attaches two animals, or two people together. When you wore a yoke, you were absolute dependent on the one your are yoked to. While the idea of wearing a yoke may not sound appealing, at first, it is a relationship that leads to peace. Some yokes are uncomfortable. Some are painful. Some weigh us down. But Jesus assures us that being yoked to him is a yoke that is easy and light. Learning His way is not burdensome. Jesus sets himself up against the Jewish teachers whose teaching was intended to keep people out. But Jesus’ teaching is easy and light. **What makes Jesus’ teaching easy and Light?**

He is **gentle toward those who fail** – example Peter. He will forgive and welcome us back into fellowship when we sin

He sends One to dwell within us to empower us to obey- the Holy Spirit.

If you are seeking for a relationship with God that is restful – peaceful, I encourage you to respond to Jesus’ invitation in these verses. Come to Him. Take His yoke and learn from Him.