

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: February 18, 2018

Sermon Title: Come to Me

Sermon Series: The Theology of Rest

Text: Matthew 11:28-30

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Date: February 18, 2018
Title: Come to Me
Text: Matthew 11:28-30
Theme: Only in Jesus can we find the rest we crave.

Introduction:

Lent can be a time when the individual and the church local recalibrates itself to God’s movements. Much of life on the horizontal can push and pull the pilgrim away from sensitivity to God’s activity. We can fail to sense the presence of God, the sufficiency of Christ’s person and work, and the comforting and powerful movement of the Holy Spirit. In fact, life can become so hectic that God becomes an afterthought in the midst of problem solving. Soon, we transfer the clutter of the horizontal to that of the vertical and begin helping God rather than trusting God. In our effort to “help” God, we become weary and heavy-laden. Not just life, but Christianity becomes something that is unattractive and unsustainable.

Yet, Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30,

28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 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. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

If our relationship with God is anything other than easy and light, we have missed the boat. Our relationship has become a cheap imitation of the real thing. This text assures us, “It is easier to be a Christian than a sinner; and of all the yokes ever imposed on men that of the Redeemer is the lightest.”¹ The text before us is of interest. **There are two contrasting conditions.**

Weary Heavy-laden	Rest Easy Light
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Notice, the text says, “We will find rest for our souls.” Why? Because “Jesus is gentle and humble in heart.” Only Jesus can give the rest we crave and this rest is only known and experienced in His presence. This is the very reason for God creating us and all that surrounds us. He created us so that we would know and experience the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and this joy is only known and experienced in His presence. Although we search elsewhere for such rest, nothing created can provide such rest. Listen to how Adam Clarke describes this paradox.

“Take my yoke upon you, strange paradox! **That a man already weary and overloaded must take a new weight upon him, in order to be eased and find rest!** But this advice is similar to that saying, Ps 55:22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee; i.e. trust thy soul and concerns to him, and he will carry both thyself and thy load.”²

The weariness described is bone jarring. It is a result of unbearable burdens. God never designed us to carry the weariness so pervasive in our current culture. Yet, contrasting with this picture is one of rest. Such rest is only possible in the way of Jesus. His way is easy and light.

Hebrews 4 is filled with the idea of rest.

⁹“So **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.** ¹⁰For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. ¹¹Therefore **let us be diligent to enter that rest,** so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:9-11).

It appears Jesus quotes from Jeremiah 6:16.

¹⁶“Thus says the LORD, ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And **you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’** ¹⁷ And I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not listen.’ ¹⁸ Therefore hear, O nations, And know, O congregation, what is among them. ¹⁹ Hear, O earth: behold, **I am bringing disaster on this people,** The fruit of their plans, Because they have not listened to My words, And as for My law, they have rejected it also” (Jer. 6:16-19).

The Lord calls His people to return to Him. It is only in Him they will find their rest. Yet, they have chosen to reject His path, His “yoke.” As such, nothing awaits them but weariness and a heavy-laden burden. There is always two competing voices, ways, paths. The one is marked by the Woman’s Seed, and the other by that of the Serpent’s. One leads to rest and the other to weariness. One is a Garden where He meets us in the cool of the day for our joy and the other is a “city” called “Babylon” where façade and illusion work to steal you from God and devour you for its pleasure. Friends, God designed us for rest and this rest is only known and experienced in His presence. It is impossible to speak of such wonder apart from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1 and 2 and reconstituted in Revelation 21 and 22. God delights for us to dwell in His presence for our joy and His glory! Oh how magnificent is such truth. Our pain is waiting for the fullest and final encounter. Yet, He can and does allow us to know and experience His rest even now while is prepares for us this “future” place (John 14:1-6).

The intent of this short study is to see ourselves as pilgrims who are in journey with and toward God. We might have to adjust our schedules and priorities in order for us to know and experience this rest. But we must believe such rest is our right and worth any investment we might make in pursuit of Him.

So as we labor to enter into His rest, let us do so for our joy and His glory. Let us not make this one of weariness and burden bearing, but rather one marked by an ease and lightness only known in His presence.

THE BIG PICTURE:

Our passage [Matt. 11:28-30] encapsulates this entire thought.

- **Introduction:** Infancy Narrative: Chapters 1-2
 - Narrative: 3-4
 - First Discourse: "**Sermon on the Mount**": 5-7
 - Narrative: 8-9
 - Second Discourse: "**Missionary Instructions**": 10
 - Narrative: 11-12
 - Third Discourse: "**Collection of Parables**": 13
 - Narrative: 14-17
 - Fourth Discourse: "**Community Instructions**": 18
 - Narrative: 19-22
 - Fifth Discourse: "**Sermon on Eschatology**": 23-25
- **Conclusion:** Passion & Resurrection Narrative: 26-28

We need to place this passage in the larger movement of Matthew's account.

- First, Matthew does present Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecies.
- Second, he presents Jesus as *the* descendant of King David and as *the* true King of Israel.
- Third, the Gospel of Matthew is built around five teaching sections separated by stories.
- Fourth, Matthew shows the tension between those who receive Jesus as King and those who reject Him as King.
- Finally, Matthew explains why some receive Him and others reject Him.

Notice the immediate context for our text.

Notice 11:18, 19 Jesus is accused of keeping company with and befriending "Tax-collectors and sinners." These are the marginalized, outcasts, and ostracized. They are the ones your parents warn you about.

Notice 11:20-24 Jesus denounces those who refuse Him.

Notice 12:1-14 Jesus is accused by the Pharisees of not keeping the Law. He is identified as a Law-breaker and not a commandment keeper. Thus, the Pharisees conspired against Him as to how they might destroy Him (12:14).

A question Matthew answers is why do some receive Him and others refuse Him? Notice 11:25-27. There is a mystery in God's plan/will [e.g. hidden/revealed]. There is something lying outside of our control that we do not and cannot govern. The fact that it follows on the heels of 11:20-24 does not make the answer any easier to process. But this is the context for our text.

It is this idea that walks us into Matthew 11:28-30. With this in mind, let us ask ourselves a handful of questions as we unpack this passage.

First, to whom is the appeal made?

Answer - to the weary and heavy-laden.

Q - Who are they? A - The tax collectors and sinners in 11:19!

Those victimized by the religious system. They know something is broken and they try to be good only to find that their good is never good enough. Notice this stream in Matthew's Gospel.

- ¹⁷“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰**For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven**” (Matt. 5:17-20).

The Sermon on the Mount reveals the impossibility of anyone to meet God's standard of righteousness. Yet, some actually think they were keeping the Law and thus righteous. Let us continue.

- ⁹“As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He *said to him, ‘Follow Me!’ And he got up and followed Him. ¹⁰Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹**When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, ‘Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?’** ¹²**But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.** ¹³**But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners”** (Matt. 9:9-13).
- ⁹“And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹**The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.** ¹²**I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’** ¹³**But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’** ¹⁴I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14).
- ¹“Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ²saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. ⁴**They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger”** (Matt. 23:1-4).
- ⁵“But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, ⁶**‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.’** ⁷The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ⁸After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁹And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; ¹⁰and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹¹**Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?** ¹²But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” (Acts 15:5-11).

There is a second group.

Those crushed by sin's wage. They have sought answers to questions in shadow and have become its slave. They are the marginalized, outcasts, and ostracized. They do not fit in or belong here.

Neither one of these groups have to be convinced of their sinfulness or brokenness.

Second, what is asked of the weary and heavy-laden?

Answer - come to me, take my yoke, and learn from me.

Third, where is this rest found for the weary and heavy-laden?

Notice the language of the text.

I will give you rest.

You will find rest.

The appeal is to JESUS. Everything we are wanting is found in CHRIST.

Fourth, is the yoke of Christ different from Christ?

Answer - No, Jesus is gentle and humble; thus, His yoke is easy and light. You cannot separate the benefits from the benefactor. There is nothing easy or light apart from Him.

Third, what is promised to the weary and heavy-laden?

Answer - rest!

Two thoughts: First, what it is not. It is not [horizontal] inactivity / laziness / apathy, or retirement. Second, what it is. It is [vertical - soul] love, acceptance, forgiveness, favor, and service.

Here is our TAKE AWAY.

First, notice the paradox - heavy-laden, yoke, burden; we move from weary to easy. We are placing on the weary a burden that produces rest!

Second, notice the power - the power of the gospel moves us from the greedy tax-collector to the generous tax-collector [e.g. Zacchaeus]. The power of the gospel moves us from sinners to saints. Think of the woman caught in adultery in John 4, "Go and sin no more."

The yoke of Christ changes us forever (1 Cor. 1).

"In this passage the Lord was addressing the people of Israel who were burdened and weighed down with the externalism and the legal do's and don'ts of the Pharisees, and with the consequences—the guilt, frustration, and dissatisfaction that always goes along with legalism. For instance, in Matthew 23:2, Christ referred to the Scribes and the Pharisees as men who "sit in Moses' seat." What was His point? The Pharisees claimed the authority of Moses as interpreters and teachers of the Law which meant they also demanded that all in Israel who submitted to Moses should also submit to them. Then, in Matthew 23:4, the Lord warned the

people of the oppressive and legalistic ways of the Pharisees. He said, "And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders." He was speaking about the way they had hidden the true meaning of the Old Testament Law with all the religious rules and regulations that these religious externalists had instituted as the way to God, to true spirituality, and as a way to receive God's blessing in life. They had codified the Mosaic law into 365 prohibitions and 250 commandments. But even though the Old Testament Law was good, holy, and righteous, it did not bring liberty because it was weak in that it depended on man. It did not provide the means of fulfilling the law and thus it left man under the guilt and load of sin. Rather than freedom, it brought oppression. Paul called it an administration of death. Instead of a sense of release, it brought a sense of guilt and failure. Those who were under the Mosaic Law were said to be yoked to Moses. Those who were under the authority of the Pharisees were said to be yoked to the Pharisees. As an illustration, see Acts 15:7-11. It is in the midst of this religious setting that the Lord makes a very gracious invitation to all who would want to experience the relief, joy, and the blessings of His life through a grace/faith relationship with Him."³

There are four ideas wrapped in our passage we need to consider.

Outline:

- I. The response to the invitation - "What does our Lord want us to do?" (vv. 28a, 29a)
 - A. "Come" "An imperative form of eimi."
 - "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).
 - "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).
 - "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance" (Matt. 21:38).
 - "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" (Matt. 22:4).
 - "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).
 - "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:6).

He wants us to respond to His invitation.

- B. "Take" [aorist active imperative]

We are to receive from Him His yoke.

C. "Learn" [aorist active imperative] used three times in Matthew. All three translated as "learn."

He wants us to submit ourselves under His instruction, to follow His lead.

Learn of me i. e. "become my disciples;" an idea also conveyed by the word "yoke," which was used commonly among the Jews for the yoke of instruction. Stier quotes from the Mishna, "Take upon you the yoke of the holy kingdom." Men of Belial="Men without the yoke," "the uninstructed."⁴

I have heard many make much of the "yoke" of Jesus. They use very heavy words. This, however, is not the emphasis of the text. He is using words like, "Easy, light, gentle, and kind." All of the commandments of Jesus are summed up in the one idea of believing in Jesus.

- ²¹ "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³ **This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ**, and love one another, just as He commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 John 3:21-24).

If Jesus means we are now culpable for all of the commands contained in the New Covenant, then such language as easy, light, and rest are a charade. If such is the case, then what Jesus offers is no different from what the religious establishment demanded. But if, Jesus keeps the commandments and thus we are to believe such is true, then what He offers is easy, light, and gives rest.

Until and unless we come to Jesus, we will not find rest for our weary and heavy-laden souls.

II. The objects of the invitation - "Who does our Lord invite" (v. 28)

Anyone who recognizes they are weary and heavy-laden. Remember, those invited have come under the heavy burden placed on them by the religious establishment and they are incapable of carrying it.

"Labor and are heavy-laden (κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι). The first an active, the second a passive participle, exhibiting the active and passive sides of human misery."⁵

"All" points to the universal significance of this offer. We are never to be partial to one group, or class, or nationality. In Christ, God reaches out to the whole world. "Who are weary and heavy laden" points us to the **objects** of the appeal. Let's note several things here: Please bear with me while I get a little bit technical and grammatical. We have two adjectival participles here which are very descriptive. Though aimed at those under the Pharisaic system, they really describe the condition of all that are either without Christ as their Savior, or who, as believers, are not submitted to Him in intimate fellowship as learning disciples. Such are "the weary and heavy laden ones." These participles are grammatically closely connected together (one article with both participles connected by *kai*) as cause and effect. The

first word, “weary,” is the *effect*, and the other word, “heavy-laden,” gives us the *cause*. Let’s take the cause first. “Heavy-laden” is *phortizo*, “to place a burden upon; to load as when placing a load upon the back of an ox.” Then, it came to mean “oppress by legal burdens.” Compare the following verse from Luke.

- “But He said, ‘Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers’” (Luke 11:46).

The tense is perfect which draws our attention to the abiding results, the overbearing burden on the backs of men. The Savior obviously has in mind the Pharisees, but it would include the burden of sin as demonstrated so clearly by the Old Testament Law which shows us all under sin, its guilt, and its death, and thus also, the burden and frustration of any solution by which men seek to deal with their sin and emptiness without Jesus Christ. “Weary” is *kopiao*, “to labor, toil, expend great effort in hard and disagreeable work,” “to grow weary, tired; labor to the point of exhaustion.” It is in the present continuous tense, and undoubtedly describes man’s fruitless efforts to deal with sin, its guilt, and personal misery whether by some form of religious legalism, or by whatever method or human strategy he seeks to deal with the emptiness and frustrations of his soul (cf. Col. 2:16-23).⁶

“Labour and are heavy laden.—The words are wide enough to cover every form of human sin and sorrow, but the thought that was most prominent in them at the time was that of the burdens grievous to be borne, the yoke of traditions and ordinances which the Pharisees and scribes had imposed on the consciences of men. (Comp. Matthew 23:4, Acts 15:10.) The first of the two words gives prominence to the active, the latter to the passive, aspect of human suffering, by whatever cause produced.”⁷

Those who wish to place on them the yoke of the Pharisees have a certain sincerity. They want to do what is right, but are incapable of doing it. Thus, Jesus offers them His yoke wherein He does all of the heavy lifting.

III. The warmth of the one who invites – “Who is it that makes the appeal?” (vv. 28a, v. 29b)

I know many an individual who know their theology, but their manner is heavy and harsh. We are a church that believes the Bible and many will hear this as harsh and unkind. Yet we are not holding to such truths heavy handed. Like Jesus, we invite the weary and heavy-laden to come and in coming to Him, they will find their rest.

IV. The promise to the invited – “What is being offered?” (vv. 28c, 29c, 30)

“I will give you rest.—The ‘I’ is emphasized in the Greek. He gives what no one else can give—rest from the burden of sin, from the weariness of fruitless toil.”⁸

You will find rest. The invitation to come is easy and light. If in our desire to be “followers” of Jesus it becomes the opposite of easy and light, then we do not have the right instructions.

“Easy” is *chrestos*. It is from a verb which means “useful, manageable, serviceable, that which fills a need and is well fitting.” In other words, it is designed to fit our needs; it is tailor-made. “Light” is *elaphros*, “light in weight, agile, not burdensome, or overbearing.”

We assume that everyone has the same opportunity to believe, but there is mystery behind all of this governed by God through providence. Yet for those who do hear, he extends a warm and embracing invitation. I cannot think of any passage that so warmly reaches out and calls to the weary and heavy-laden. There is nothing about Christianity that is heavy and weary. When properly understood, Jesus Christ is liberating. Jesus is not heavy; the fall is heavy. Jesus lifts the fall and gives liberty to the captive.

We know the Father through the Son. Matthew 12 will show how the many who profess to know the Father do not since they reject the Father’s Son. We must read the whole *Story* in order to “feel” the weight of the unfolding.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Perhaps you have tried to carry the weight of self-salvation and have found yourself coming up short.
2. Jesus offers you a better way where He has done all the heavy lifting.
3. To those who are weary and heavy-laden Jesus says, “It is finished.”
4. If you have come, please consider whether or not you have placed on yourself or others a burden you and they were never designed to bear.
5. If you are weary and heavy-laden, then His invitation to come is still valid. Have you? Will you?

¹ *Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary* on Matthew 11:29.

² *Adam Clarke’s Commentary* on Matthew 11:29.

³ <https://bible.org/article/call-discipleship-invitation-rest-matthew-1128-30>

⁴ *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* on Matthew 11:29.

⁵ *Vincent’s Word Studies* on Matthew 11:28.

⁶ <https://bible.org/article/call-discipleship-invitation-rest-matthew-1128-30>

⁷ *Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers* on Matthew 11:28.

⁸ *Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers* on Matthew 11:28.