

## Great Sayings Of Jesus Come To Me, All You Who Labour.

Text: Mat 11:28-30

Suggested Hymns:

373, 306, 162, 839, 308

1) A look at the text

2) The burden of man

3) Reconciliation with God is what is needed

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 11:28-30,<sup>28</sup> *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* <sup>29</sup> *“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.* <sup>30</sup> *“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

There are streams of water that roll over gravel beds without a ripple on the surface. Long years of constant washing by the water have worn all the stones smooth at the edges. This means that the stones offer no resistance to the stream. The water moves on effortlessly at such places, while the stones lie serenely beautiful and content on the bottom.

There is danger that the living waters of God’s Word have passed for a long time over our lives that we are little affected by them. This is a particular danger when we read or hear a passage from Scripture that is as familiar as today’s text. It is one of the best-known sayings of Jesus, one which you probably committed to memory a long time ago. The very sound of the words is soothing, but you must be careful not to confuse mere familiarity with the effect these words should leave upon your understanding.

This saying of Jesus should not just produce in you a gentle feeling of spiritual satisfaction, a mellow glow of religious emotion. It is intended to challenge you with issues of profound significance for your whole life. It is a gracious saying, indeed, but let us remember that the grace of God changes people both inwardly and outwardly. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## 1. A First Impression Of The Text

Undoubtedly you have often looked to this text in time of distress, because it expressly invites those who *“labour and are heavy laden”* and promises *“rest.”* There can be little question that you are justified in finding immense comfort for your troubles in these words.

When Jesus spoke these words, He must have been aware that there would always be a vast audience of people weighed down with care, slowed up by anxiety, and therefore eager to seize upon these words as an encouragement to hope.

No one had a more abiding sympathy for human weakness, or a deeper compassion for human frailty, than the Son of Man. Certainly Jesus includes in His invitation and promise a rich blessing for those for whom the purely physical circumstances of life have become unbearable. Those individuals who know pain, heartache, frustration, fear, and loneliness — all these people should certainly come at Jesus' invitation and be refreshed.

### A Deeper Look At The Text

But beyond this apparent meaning of Jesus' words we ought to sharpen our insights into this text. When Jesus invited those who *“labour and are heavy laden”* to come to Him for *“rest,”* the Saviour was not simply calling attention to the world of physical weariness and monotony.

He included that, but He was also recognising the reality of that unseen world in which the spirit of man labours restlessly to find God and be at peace with Him. In this world of spiritual experience, as well as in the world of material experience, Jesus knew only too well that a person becomes depressed and exhausted. Especially to such people Jesus invites and promises, *“Come to Me ... and I will give you rest.”*

## 2. The Burden of Man — Separation from God

Jesus was not unaware of the truth that a person's spirit is likely to *“labour”* and grow *“heavy, laden,”* because he is separated from God and burdened with sin. All human life is separated from God by sin. This is the intolerable burden of every man's existence — he knows he is *“on the outs”* with God, and he senses he has no way of *“making up”* to God.

It should be emphasised that this “*lostness*” is more than a casual figure of speech concerning man. It is the profoundly tragic description of man’s very nature and all that makes him a human being. Man is by nature without the friendship of God and without hope in this world.

We are mistaken if we think that only individual acts of rebellion against God’s divine will are sin. St. John does indeed call sin “*the transgression of the Law.*”<sup>1</sup> But we must face the even more uncomplimentary fact that such transgressions proceed from a basically corrupt human source.

There is no getting around this truth about ourselves, for Jesus made it plain, “*out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*”<sup>20</sup> “*These are the things which defile a man.*”<sup>2</sup> This is the same truth about man that Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*”<sup>3</sup>

### **The Horror Of Spiritual Worlds In Conflict**

There, then, is the real issue in the divine-human encounter, Man lives in another world from God, where man in his own ability cannot reach through to God. In this world, where for all practical purposes God does not exist for the unregenerated, man dares to flout the will of His Maker. Man’s world is not separated from God’s world by space or time. It is the separation of man’s radical evil and God’s consuming holiness. These two forces are in unalterable opposition to each other.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that man should “*labour*” and be “*heavy laden*” when he thinks of God? As desperately as a man may want to know God and live at peace with his Creator, he is simply crushed in all his efforts by the truth that God will have no part — indeed, His holiness precludes His having any part — in the world of man’s sin.

And man’s despair is deepened by the further truth that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, man can do to bring about a change in this situation between himself and God. There is finality about man’s “*lostness*” to God that is utterly incomprehensible in its horror. Perhaps the 88th Psalm comes closest to analysing this horror when it speaks of man without God as one who is “*Adrift among the dead.*”<sup>4</sup>

*“Adrift among the dead”* — what a picture of human life! There is a guessing game which consists of asking a group of people the single question, *“If you were the last man on earth and sitting alone in your home, and you heard a knock on the door, who do you think it would be?”* If you think about that question seriously, you may catch some of the horror of being *“adrift among the dead,”* an individual lost and alone in a world where, oddly enough, you are terrorised at being discovered by the one Person, Jesus Christ who can befriend you and save you.

### **The Problem Of Spiritual Separation From God Is Often Denied**

That man’s sinful separation from God causes his spirit to *“labour”* and be *“heavy laden”* should be obvious. Yet there are millions of people who do not recognise that the first problem of human existence is a spiritual problem.

Today many people try to explain all group problems, and individual ones, in terms of personal relations. People are unhappy and disturbed and anxious, they say, because they have not successfully integrated themselves, or been integrated, into the society to which they belong.

Sometimes society is at fault in not offering better conditions in which to live. There is too much unemployment, not enough adequate housing, too little economic security, or even hostile political forces threatening their way of life.

Sometimes individuals are at fault in not communicating intelligibly and clearly with their fellow men, in setting up barriers of prejudice, in being unskilled in compromise. The solution to these problems, according to the way many leaders look at it, is to improve human relations by genetics, medicine, education, technological discoveries, political and economic programs and social reforms.

They think that when using these aids man learns to control nature and to adjust himself to all the outward circumstances of life, he will be truly liberated from all his previous feelings of guilt.

Then, man will cease to be inhibited by any fear of future divine judgement for his present actions. In sum, the solution to the ancient human problem, which Christians quaintly call *“sin,”* is that man must seek to reconcile himself with his sinful past.

He must lift himself to a higher plane of intelligent existence. When he has thus finally and fully conquered himself and his surroundings, and adjusted himself to co-existing with others who are similarly self-conquering and changed personalities, then man will have attained the ultimate human dignity.

Man will be able to say according to such unspiritual thinking, *“I am a man, and there is no other god beside me; I know myself and save myself!”* There will be peace then, and a well integrated society will give man all the rest he needs. But all this is a lie, is all we Christians need to say.

### **3. Reconciliation With God Is What Is Needed**

It is a truly disturbing thing to contemplate how men do misunderstand their own problems and how far wrong they are in trying to solve that which causes them to *“labour”* and be *“heavy laden.”* This misunderstanding and failure is simply another strong evidence of human sin, of men missing the mark of having God at the centre of their lives.

To help people recover their lost aim in life, God must come to this world of sinners. In the person of Jesus Christ, God undertook to reconcile His world with ours and His holiness with our sinfulness. It cost Jesus Christ the price of humiliation, shedding of blood, and death to accomplish this reconciliation of man with God. For once and all time Jesus Christ made it possible for man to live in God’s world without fear and to be God’s loved and loving child.

#### **The Word Of Reconciliation**

To this glad news, His Gospel, Jesus Christ invites *“all who labour and are heavy laden.”* *“Come to Me.”* He alone can give man *“rest.”* For Jesus Christ, in that one great climactic act of love upon the cross, in which He let Himself be torn away from His heavenly Father by the sins of the world, lifted the burden and load of sin from us.

We like to say that the Cross of Jesus forgives, and so it does, for it takes all our sin out of God’s way of looking at us. By the simple act of believing this power of the Saviour’s Cross, we pass from the terror of being *“adrift among the dead”* to the indescribable joy of being free in the land of the living.

Now we belong to God’s world again; there is no more loneliness, no more *“lostness,”* and no more separation from God. Christ has solved the greatest

problem of our life, Scripture says in Romans 5:1-2, <sup>1</sup> *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Here is the good news that gives rest to every man, woman, or child who knows the loneliness of sin's separation from God, who *"labours"* and is *"heavy laden"* under the burden of human guilt. I know you have heard this before, but it is a truth which bears repetition, because we can so easily misunderstand what life's central problem actually is; and so frequently we look for solutions to our problem everywhere else but at the Cross.

Let me, therefore, put it to you once again — peace for your mind, hope for your body, rest for your conscience, calm for your soul — these treasures of life, coveted by every human being, are to be had only by trusting the forgiving, reconciling life and death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

*"Come to Me,"* says Christ, *"... and I will give you rest."* Jesus says in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* And in John 6:37 *"the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."*

### **"Rest" Means A Responsible Life**

One final word concerning this gracious promise of Christ. No one should imagine that he can enter into the "rest" of his Saviour without also assuming the Saviour's obligation in our text, <sup>29</sup> *"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. <sup>30</sup> "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Jesus is indicating that when we enter into God's world, we are not relieved of living a responsible life. The *"rest"* that is given to the children of God is not inaction. Instead, it is the power and the courage and the joy — and the freedom from fatigue of doing all things for God.

Whether we eat or drink, work or play, live or die, we *"do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*<sup>5</sup> We Christians live day by day in the overwhelming confidence of the forgiveness of sins. Each morning we wake up, and we know that we are the redeemed and

sanctified children of our heavenly Father. We belong to God's order of things. Only one thing matters to us, that we have peace with God. Could it be otherwise than that we should love God and glorify Him and hold Him central in all we are or have?

### **Love Is the Secret**

This, then, is the secret of taking Christ's "*yoke*" and "*burden*" — to be so changed by trusting Him as our Sin-bearer that we are freed for service, to God.

For Christ to bear our sinful burden, knowing that it will kill Him, requires meekness and lowliness of heart not only on Christ's part but on our part as well. But it is out of humility before His loving sacrifice that our love finally grows.

And with our growing love and wonder at such divine humiliation will come also commitment to do God's will.

Augustine was right when he said, "*All things are easy for those who love,*" and we are in love with God because "*He first loved us*"<sup>6</sup> "*and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins.*"<sup>7</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 3:4

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 15:19

<sup>3</sup> John 3:6

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 88:5

<sup>5</sup> Colossians 3:17

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 4:19

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 4:10