

“Walk with Jesus to Find Rest”

Matthew 11:25-30

In our theme ‘Walking with God’ this year, we began in Genesis 3 where we saw that God’s initial routine with Adam and Eve was He came to join them for a walk in the garden of Eden

3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

God’s desire from Genesis to Revelation is to be with His people. The Bible begins & ends with this, as we look forward to the day when we will be in eternity with God on the new earth:

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

We’ve explored numerous passages where God or Jesus invite us to walk with them. This morning we want to look at a passage where Jesus invites to walk with Him with, what may appear at first an odd word picture, to yoke ourselves to Jesus.

Jesus gives us many word pictures of Himself to describe who He is and how He ministers to us. As the Good Shepherd He leads us along life’s paths to meets our needs. As the Vine He nourishes us branches with the nutrients we need to grow spiritually and produce fruit. As the light He’s our hope and focal point. Yet here in Matt. 11:25-30 Jesus calls us to be yoked to Him. Jesus is using an agricultural word picture where we allow Jesus to carry our burdens, joining Himself to us to produce fruit. That is a powerful image because it illustrates Jesus’ willingness to be with us everyday desiring to relieve us of our burdens when we put our trust in Him.

However, there’s another aspect to this ‘yoke’ image that I believe Jesus was referring to. To ‘yoke’ yourself to someone in Jesus’ day was to join a Rabbi and follow him; to learn His teachings, apply them to your life and then share them with your own disciples one day. This is what Jesus’ hearers would have understood Him to say and the evidence is in the passage itself. Jesus said if we ‘yoke’ ourselves to Him and His teachings we will find rest for our souls. That sounds so inviting, so why don’t we do it more often? It’s not just a yoke yourself once to Jesus and you’ll never have any more problems, it’s an ongoing need to stay close to Jesus because we need mental, spiritual and even physical rest which are often absent in our lives.

Here in Matthew 11 Jesus has been talking about John the Baptist who had been arrested by Herod. Jesus praised John and challenged the crowd to believe that John was the one whom the prophets prophesied about; the Elijah who was to come before the Messiah. But to believe John was an actual prophet and the forerunner to the Messiah meant you had to believe Jesus was the Messiah. Which many were not willing to do. So Jesus rebukes the crowds and in particular the religious leaders who claimed Jesus was a drunk and a glutton because He ate with those the religious leaders labelled ‘sinners’. They rejected Him in spite of the miracles He had performed. Then Jesus announces judgment on 3 local cities who witnessed His miracles and yet rejected Him.

Judgment that will be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah because they saw the power of God in Jesus and but refused to believe He was the Messiah.

Then Jesus praises God for opening up the minds of some people who weren't trusting in their own intellect but in what they heard and saw in Jesus

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

²⁷ *"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

But Jesus doesn't exclude some from anyone; instead, He calls out to those who were rejecting Him since

Anyone is Invited to Come to Jesus **(11:25-28)**

²⁸ *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

When Jesus says, 'come to me' the emphasis is on 'Me'. He is equating Himself as all authoritative, that in Him people will know God and find truth. What burden did people need to be freed from? People ...

Who are listening to the wrong voices (v.28a)

'Weary' refers to our own efforts to find rest for our own soul. Burdened means someone is putting a burden on you, relentlessly. Who? The religious leaders. The people were weary from trying to keep all the laws that the Pharisees had made up which were supposed to prove you were righteous. It was impossible to keep all these laws and now they wrongly concluded God wouldn't accept them. They were listening to the wrong voices. These religious teachers continually burdened them by pointing out their illnesses and their poverty were proof of God's unacceptance. How do you ever get out from under that?

We know this is what Jesus is referring to because later in Ch. 23:4 He says this about the Pharisees

⁴ *They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*

The words 'heavy loads' here is the same Greek word for burdened in 11:28. The reason why Jesus invites everyone and anyone is because many are

Burdened by self-righteousness (v.28b)

Jesus offers to ease the burdens of people who are trying to please God by their own efforts. He offers this because He takes the burden of our own sins and dies for us. When we yoke ourselves to Jesus, He carries our burdens trying to please ourselves or others' expectations of ourselves. When we follow His teaching our life becomes freer now that He walks with You. Jesus wants to yoke Himself to us. The word 'yoke' literally means to balance the scales. The purpose of the yoke was to relieve stress, not increase it. So then Jesus' offer to yoke Himself to us is for

Anyone who wants to find God's peace (v.28c)

The rest Jesus offers is the relief from having to carry the burden of our sins – which He died for – and the relief from discouragements and worry that we carry around each day. Yoking ourselves to Jesus means to trust Him to give us future rest when this life ends but also peace with Him now. The peace that surpasses all understanding when we release our anxieties to Him and thank Him for who He is and what He's doing for us. This is why Jesus offers to yoke Himself to us because people were needlessly burdened by legalism and other's standards that said 'You're not good enough for God' over and over. That teaching misrepresents God. And if you claim to be offering a way to God and it's not according to the Bible then you are lying about God. Many people have bought the lie that God is a harsh taskmaster, never pleased with us. But God and Jesus offers to ease our burdens because

He wants us to know Him (vv.25-27)

Back up to vv.25-27. Jesus thanked God because God in His grace opened the hearts of those in society who are told they are not good enough. God wants us to open our hearts to Him, which is why He sent Jesus. 'God so loved the world'. Jesus tells the truth about God. And many people have sat in churches that misrepresent God. Jesus was not saying anything different that God had not already said in the Old Testament. Listen to these two passages from the Law about the character of God:

Ex. 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." ¹⁴ The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

God wants to offer His people rest. Then Moses asks to see God's glory and God gives Moses a glimpse of His glory and as He passes by Moses He tells Moses what He's like,

⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

God is slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. To yoke with Jesus is to learn the heart of God who wants to give us 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."

Jesus is offering people a choice. He's a Rabbi calling people to follow Him. Not make a decision about Him, but to follow Him. It's a lifetime choice. So

We Need to Choose to Let Jesus Guide our Life **(11:29-30)**

When we place our trust in Jesus, He will take it all on Himself and won't jerk us around or drag us around. To yoke yourself to Jesus meant to

Walk with Him daily to learn ... (v.29a)

Seeing groups of disciples walking behind their Rabbi was a common sight in Jesus' day. To be a disciple meant to walk with your teacher and learn from Him. Listen to His teaching and how He applied it in their day-to-day experiences and interactions with people. What is it Jesus wants us to learn from Him? It's not just knowledge but how to live by faith in God. Unlike the harsh, legalistic Pharisaic teaching, Jesus wants us to walk with Him daily and learn

... How to become like Him (v.29b)

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,

If we claim to be united to Jesus we should be gentler and humbler. We are surrounded by harshness, anger and judgmental attitudes. The world needs to see grace and we as Jesus' disciples need to be learning from Jesus on how to be kinder and more compassionate. The word 'gentle' doesn't mean weak or a pushover, it means to be so confident in who you are in Christ, that we don't need to overreact to prove our point or defend ourselves. If God and Jesus are slow to anger, compassionate and gracious so must we display that to the world to help them know who God and Jesus are. Let's not misrepresent God and Jesus ourselves by treating people harshly when we disagree with their opinions.

The word 'humble' doesn't mean to think less of ourselves but to think of ourselves as God sees us. If we're in them we're secure. The emphasis here is on position. Jesus never used His status as God's Son to lord it over people. He came down to become one of us so He could relate to anyone in the world. This is what it means to learn from Him to become like Him, to not look down on anyone.

³⁰ *For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

Here Jesus quotes part of Jer. 6:16 when Jeremiah, speaking for God said,

¹⁶ This is what the LORD says: *"Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."*

Jesus wasn't saying anything new. He was peeling back the layers of untruth and rules so that people could see that they had been lied to. Is all this rule-keeping giving you rest? No. Jesus invites us to learn how to be like Him

And experience eternal peace (vv.29c-30)

The idea of weekly, biblical rest is to stop burdening yourself with work for a day. When we stop our work one day a week (it won't go away), and gather with God's people, we learn together what it means to become like Him and encourage one another by sharing our burdens. We find joy and satisfaction from our peace with God, knowing He's in control of our life. The yoke of Jesus was open arms. The yoke of the Pharisees was finger-pointing.

In the very next passage in Ch. 12:1-14, the Pharisees point their fingers at Jesus' disciples and say, 'You're breaking the law by picking grains of wheat in your hands.' And then when they brought a man with a shrivelled hand and challenged Jesus whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not, Jesus reminds them that the Sabbath is a day for lifting burdens. If your sheep falls into a ditch on a Sabbath, won't you get it out? How much more valuable is a human? Then He heals

the man. The disciples were hungry. Jesus allowed them to eat and lifted their burden. The man with a shrivelled hand was not allowed in the synagogue. So Jesus lifted His burden, freeing Him to worship.

So we are to walk with Jesus daily, learning from Him so that we start to look like Him as we 'collect His dust'. In doing so we find peace with God and eternal joy so that now we can help others experience it too (12:1-14)

Walking is usually a physical exercise that makes you work and expend energy. But the more you do it, the better you're health. Walking with Jesus, spending time in His Word, praying to Him and getting involved in people's lives expends energy but satisfies your soul because you're doing what God calls us to do.

If you've been trying to make yourself righteous by your own efforts, it isn't working for you and will never work. We are all sinners, separated from God until we confess we are sinners, ask Jesus to forgive us for our sins and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour. His Spirit comes into our life giving us peace with God because now we're united to Him. But that peace is strained when we try and solve our own problems and are anxious about our needs. Paul reminds us in Phil. 4:6-7,

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Why in Christ Jesus? Because you are allowing Him to guide you as you learn from Him.

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message please
contact us at olivet@rideau.net