

Come to Jesus

Matthew 11:25-30¹

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Tired, weary, fatigued... These are common words we hear people describe their life. These words are often heard during the pandemic time.

The hurrying worrying, pace of our lives often brings great fatigue.

Many people though are weary of the troubles, trials, and even moral decay of our generation. Many feel it in their perception of bigotry, race, gender. They are tired, weary of the way they are treated. Many feel it in their perception of the slow spiraling decline of our culture. Some feel it in the unending, relentless bad news. Some feel it in constant barrage of lies, errors, myths that people believe and live by and denounce others for not accepting them as well.



In the midst of all this weighty, wearying stuff comes Jesus to speak into our lives. What He has to say is both dreadful and delightful. Jesus will press into our lives the reality and the cost of what it means to follow Him. But maybe this just seems to add ever more pressure on already heavily burdened souls. Yes, He speaks words of truth. He comforts the needy. He heals the afflictions of the crowds. His compassion is a spark of hope and help. All the while, His words call for total trust, total surrender, total commitment, entering into a cross-bearing life of discipleship. Many have questioned and even rejected what Jesus said and will say to us today.

At the core of what true Christians believe is the gospel. The word simply means, good news. It is truth about who Jesus is, what He has done and what He requires of you. Surprisingly, this good news almost always opens with what feels like... bad news. Our text then opens with Jesus pronouncing judgment on the unbelief. He is talking to Jewish people. But Matthew, who wrote this book, is writing to all of us. So we must also listen what feels like hard words. At the center of Jesus' censure is the Scriptures. In Jesus' use of the Scriptures, He makes an astounding claim.

We are challenged to carefully consider whether we are true followers of Jesus. The repeated refrain is, will you believe in an obeying way the person, position, preaching and power of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you accept His Divine authority?

Jesus pronounces judgments on cities in which He has done His mighty works. But, in the midst of judgment and a startling truth, Jesus invites us to come to Him. And, along with the truth of submitting to God, the Father's will and the Son revealing Himself according to the Father's will, there is a gracious invitation. These are not in conflict. They are in harmony.

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A Great Problem (v. 20-24)

We open with the bad news. The bad news is very bad. There is judgment coming because people would not repent and receive Jesus as the King.

²⁰ Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

Now, don't get lost in unfamiliar cities, places, and people. But what Jesus says is generally true for us as well. These are stinging words. There is the judgment that is pronounced. There are shocking comparisons Jesus made.

They Refused to Repent (v.20)

Jesus is pronouncing the judgment. He has been preaching in many cities. He has proclaimed the gospel. He has sent His disciples to do the same, empowering them to do mighty miracles. He has cared for people, healing their diseases, casting out demons and calling on them to receive Him as their promised Messiah and King.

Jesus pronounces judgment upon the unrepentant. Despite all the evidence presented, they refused to repent. They simply did not believe the message Jesus and His disciples were preaching. Even though Jesus was doing great miracles, they still would not believe.

There are dreadful consequences for rejecting Jesus as King. These people Jesus was talking to were rejecting a once for all offer of God's great kingdom. Though this was planned from eternity past, the people were responsible for their rejection. When anyone rejects Jesus as King, then you are not receiving a personal salvation. Rejecting Jesus and the gospel will lead to judgment. It is no light thing to say, “no.” You never know how long you will live. You only have this moment, today. Will you repent of sin, of unbelief and believe in Jesus and bow to Him?

They Rejected Jesus' Power (v.21-22)

Jesus is speaking to the crowds. It is safe to say that some are from those cities. Two cities have judgment pronounced on them, Chorazin and Bethsaida. This is done in the form of a prophetic “woe”. These were Jewish cities full of “religious” people.

Tyre and Sidon, both terrible, wicked, slave-trading, cities were often condemned. Yet, if they had heard Jesus' preaching and seen Jesus' power, they would have genuinely repented. What a shocking word to these religious, Jewish people. What a terrible denunciation. Yet what hope for us who are taking the gospel into all the world.

What had these people rejected that the others would have accepted? They rejected Jesus' authority, His power. Yes, that power was evident in preaching and in great miracles. But ultimately, they were rejecting Jesus as their King. They refused to believe and bow to Jesus. And so, because they refused to repent when presented with such a great witness, they would receive an even greater judgment.

They Reveled in their Pride (v.23-24)

“And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?” Remember, Capernaum is where Jesus was living with His disciples. It was his adopted hometown. Peter, one of His disciples had a home there as well. Even people in Jesus’ hometown, refused to repent. How could this be? It is understandable that a city having a passing ministry by Jesus, might fail to hear and heed the message. But Capernaum?

Why would they not repent? Why do most people not believe and bow to Jesus? Because of pride. People will not repent because of self-exaltation. Jesus is just a part of the normality of life. Religion had become the norm. There was nothing special about the claim or the call of Jesus.

Another allusion is here as well. This “exalted to the heaven” was the prideful language of Lucifer. His heart was lifted up so that He aspired to be worshipped as a god. Though heaven was his original home, he was cast out and cast down. The pride and self-elevation of Capernaum had the sense, the smell, the shape of Satan’s prideful heart.

But certain humiliation is coming. Capernaum’s citizens may think they are elevated to the heaven. But they are cast down into the grave. And this is a message for you as well. You think you have life, are living the life. But all of us are headed towards death. So here is Jesus’ analysis. You will not hear and heed Jesus because, in your pride, you don’t need Him. Jesus is just one of them although, a special one of them.

But then their shocking comparison. If what had been done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, Sodom would have repented and would still exist. This is a stunning condemnation. The pride of Capernaum, their disbelief and unrepentance is worse than the degraded and depraved homosexual culture of Sodom. It will be worse for the people who rejected Jesus in Capernaum than the homosexuals of the city of Sodom.

We are deeply challenged...

What do you think about this? Does this disturb your sense of justice, of rightness?

You do not think of disbelief and unrepentance the way the Bible does.

You think that good, well-meaning people disbelieve what the Bible says. You just cannot see how desperately wicked unbelief and rejection of Jesus is.

Your scales of justice and judgment are way out of balance.

You think of power-mad, slave-trading, wealth-greedy people as being so much worse than your nice, moral neighbor who just doesn’t believe what the Bible says and has rejected the gospel. You think of adultery, fornication, same-sex sins as being so much worse than our children who, having heard the Bible and grown up around the Bible, do not believe and do not repent. I have a hard and terrible word for you – that is not so. The greatest sin in the Bible is to not believe and not repent when confronted with the truth of who Jesus is and what He has done.

People do not go to hell because of the sins they commit.

People are condemned from conception. People are born sinners. Sinning is what sinners do because, well, they are sinners. Plenty of people who have committed what we think of as the worst sins will be in heaven. David, the Jewish king, was an adulterer. Paul, the Apostle, had killed Christians. There were former sinners of all kinds including homosexuality in the church at Corinth. Jesus died on the cross and was raised

again to pay for all those sins. But not one single person will be in heaven who refused to believe and would not repent. Not one.

Beloved, these are new eyes through which to see the world. They are the lenses Jesus gives us. The whole New Testament underscores the necessity of faith. "For by grace are you saved through faith..." (Ephesians 2:8).

A Grand Truth (v.25-27)

Jesus welcomes the will of His father and so offers a prayer of thanksgiving.

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

"At that time..." Matthew is emphatic. In front of the crowds and immediately after these stunning denunciations, Jesus offers a public prayer. In verses 25-26 Jesus is talking to His Father but in the hearing of the crowd. Verse 27, Jesus is talking to the crowd directly.

Gratitude for the Father's Will (v.25-26)

Jesus address His Father as the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. This is the issue for all people. In this prayer, Jesus shows what it means to believe and bow.

Jesus is thankful for what His sovereign Father has chosen to do. God has chosen to disclose Himself contrary to the way people expect. He has chosen not to reveal Himself to the social elites, the wealthy, the intelligentsia, the religious authorities. But He has chosen to reveal Himself to the poor, the needy, the dependent; that is, to disciples. The Father has chosen to disclose Himself to those who are eager for the relationship.

Authority in the Father's Will (v.27)

²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Do you hear the claim Jesus is making? Believing and bowing to this claim is at the heart of whether or not you are a true follower of Jesus. Jesus is declaring that He is the center and sum of all revelation of God, the Father. At the center of all God's self-disclosure is the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfills all the Old Testament. He is the heart of all revelation.

Look carefully at the pieces that make up what Jesus declares.

Jesus maintains that God the Father conceals and reveals according to his will.

People cannot grasp the Christian understanding of and relationship with God by their own efforts. That means you. You cannot discern who Jesus is, what the kingdom is, unless God shows you. He conceals these things from those who are wise in their own conceits. He reveals them to those who come with childlike trust and teachableness. So, do you?

Jesus claims to be the supreme representative of the Father.

Jesus comes from the Father's side. He is equipped with the Father's power and authority. He is displaying the compassion of the Father's heart. He fully represents God. He comes with God's own claim on human hearts.

Only the Father fully understands Jesus.

Not John, not the disciples, not the wise or even the little children. With the limited ability of the human mind and heart it cannot be done. It takes God to know God. Only the Father knows the Son.

Only Jesus fully understands the Father.

Great people have discovered and taught many true and noble things about God. But nobody has known the Father with the intimacy of Jesus, who could call him Abba, dear daddy. Jesus does not just know something about God. He does not even know everything about God. He knows God absolutely. It is simply breathtaking.

Jesus and He alone can reveal the Father.

This is because Jesus shares the Father's nature as well as ours. He can show us because He knows. He can introduce us because He belongs: He is the Son.

~ (All of the above points are adapted from Green, p.140-141)

Jesus chooses to whom He reveals the Father.

God's ways are often mysterious and hard for us to understand. Those who come to know the Father do so because Jesus has chosen to reveal the Father to them. But those who do not believe and remain unrepentant are accountable for their unbelief. Those two truths may be hard to reconcile; they are nevertheless, both still true.

A Gracious Invitation (v.28-30)

If this text ended here there will be no real good news. But it doesn't. Jesus goes on to invite sin-laden souls to receive rest.

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

There is condemnation for the unbelieving and unrepentant. But what a gracious invitation is extended and can be responded to.

An Offer for the Sinner (v.28)

Those who are weary and heavy laden are invited. What is making people weary? What is the heavy burden that they carry? How would someone in the crowd hear this? From the context, Jesus is extending an invitation to those who are:

...Weary of their sin. Yes, sometimes people are weary and burdened down by their sin. The guilt, the complications, the consequences all weigh down on them.

...Burdened by afflictions. Disease, sickness, and even demon oppression were and still are common. They create enormous burdens for people to carry.

...Weighed down with the troubles of life. Many people are just tired of all the trials and troubles they experience. It never seems to end. One trouble simply tumbles into another.

...Struggle with the burden of religion. Why do I say that? The Pharisees were adding burden upon burden on the people. The legalism was wearying. The Law was demanding. For people with sensitive consciences, it was never, ever satisfied. Religion is a great and terrible burden.

...Exhausted by works. People find that trying to be good enough is never enough. Works don't work. Works are never enough. The demands are too high. The burden too large to carry.

What if none of this is true of you? Then, quite plainly, Jesus is not talking to you. That you are not burdened and heavy laden is a problem. Your sin, guilt, and condemnation are real and pending. You have a bad heart - you are a sinner. You have a bad record - you do things that are wrong. This means you are condemned and will be judged. This is simply true.

Ah, but Jesus' invitation is to come to Him. This is a simple invitation. It is offered to sinners and saints alike. Sinners need to come to Jesus to believe in Him and to bow to Him. Saints need to come to Jesus to lay our burdens down, to stop our fleshly works, to stop trying to keep the Law, to rest in who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

Jesus offers rest that is release from sin, Law and works. He made that possible by His death on the cross and His resurrection. He suffered the punishment God required. He took the condemnation and went through the judgment you deserved. He was raised from the dead so that He now lives and lives forever. Jesus then has done all that was necessary, all that was required, so that you may believe in Him and bow to Him. By faith, you can enter into the rest Jesus offers. It is rest from all your many and varied self-salvation projects. It is rest by trusting in Jesus alone.

A Promise from the Savior (v.29-30)

²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

A yoke is a wooden device that allowed two animals to pull a plow or wagon together. It meant they shared the load. Jesus invites you to take a yoke. He is inviting to take up something that will join you to Him. But what is His yoke? His yoke is about knowing Him and what He taught. because he adds "and learn from me". Don't lift this out of its context. Jesus' yoke is not the heavy burdensome collar that religion has laid upon "people's shoulders". Jesus is **not** inviting you to trade one heavy yoke for another.

A Biblical yoke has a lightness to it. Jesus' call and commands have been graciously given by God for our good. They are given from the One who is "gentle and lowly in heart," One who has carried them Himself – our Lord Jesus! Being lowly in heart and meek is the meaning and model of what taking up the cross causes for us. It transforms us into people who are like Him. The yoke is teaching us and training us into being true disciples, true followers.

How is taking a yoke rest? Because we are taking it up with Jesus. We are not taking it from Him. He is in the traces with any and all who will come and will take it up. Following Jesus is not burdensome. Oh, it is the cross-kind of life. It is costly. But we do not bear a burden alone. We are learning, living, and being transformed by the who is in the yoke with us.

An Assurance for the Believing (v. 29-30)

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

Be clear as to what is entailed. There is a yoke, and it is learning of Christ.

Be clear what Jesus is like. He is gentle and humble in heart. His warning is stern, clear, unmistakable. His heart is gentle, humble. His invitation is gracious.

Be clear what you will receive. You will receive pardon, forgiveness, life, salvation – that is, you will receive and enter into rest. What Sweet rest from all your soul's burdens will be yours.

Be clear what Jesus is inviting you to. He inviting you to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus. He is inviting you to take a cross-kind of life. IT is a yoke. It has its weights. But its is one that is easy and light.

Reflect and Respond

We have a powerful warning...

Unrepentance and unbelief bring great condemnation. Repent today while there is yet the opportunity.

We have a difficult teaching...

We must simply accept what the Bible teaches. What you believe about who Jesus is and what He has done as our Redeemer and Ruler is the central issue. There is no other way to heaven but through Jesus. And God chooses to whom He will reveal Himself.

We have a gracious invitation...

Burdened and wearied by sin, afflictions, struggles the troubles and trials of this world? Jesus invites you to come to Him, to follow Him in true discipleship, to take up His yoke and there, oh there, He will give you rest?

Will you?