

“COME UNTO ME”  
Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30  
July 3, 2005  
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The text for this morning is from Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 11, beginning at verse 28, familiar words:

*<sup>28</sup>“Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest unto your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

This invitation of our Lord is a universal invitation to all who are weary and heavy laden. It was issued after the blatant rejection of Jesus by the favored cities of Galilee. These cities had neither eyes to see nor the heart to follow the Christ of God.

Jesus’ reaction to their impenitence was not with bitter or cynical words, but with words of thanks to God that nothing could frustrate God’s sovereign purposes. It is an invitation spoken to people who are desperately searching for God, anxiously trying to be good, driven to weariness and despair because of finding the task impossible.

The Pharisees and other religious leaders of the day had imposed great burdens of religious rules for the people to follow, while for themselves they devised routes around the rules, twisting them for their own convoluted purposes.

As we examine this invitation of infinite tenderness, let us remember that Man’s hate and obstinacy could not then, and cannot now, extinguish God’s love and grace. The invitation says: *Come*. What does that mean? *Come*. It means *approach*, approach the throne of grace in confession, for if we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins. It means *draw near* and receive what He has to offer, for as many as receive Him, to them He gives power to become Children of God. It means *reach out* and take what He has to offer; He offers us bread, eternal bread. He said:

*I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry.*

It means reach out and take the water He offers. He said:

*If anyone one thirsts, let them come to me and drink.*

*Come unto Me*. The object of our faith is not a church, nor a creed, nor a baptismal or confirmation certificate, but it is the Living Christ. Salvation is in a PERSON who has experienced our human condition, that we may feel in our hearts the sympathizing Jesus.

*Come unto Me*. I have lived in your human flesh; I have experienced your human condition. *Come unto Me, all you . . . .*

God so loved the world, not just our little corner, not just our little group, not just our little race, or our denomination, but the whole world — the entire world, red, yellow, black, brown — all are precious in His sight and all are objects of His love.

*God so loved the world that whosoever believes in Him* — and I like to insert here: regardless of whatsoever they have done — *shall not perish, but have everlasting life*. That means we will have fellowship with God that begins the moment we trust in Christ, and continues on in to Eternity. There is nothing we can do, or could do, that would make Him stop loving us or forgiving us. Nothing, no one, can separate us from that love except our own unwillingness to take what He offers us.

*Come unto me **all** you who labor and are heavy laden*. The people of Jesus' day were burdened with the religiosity of the Pharisees and struggled under the weight of those many rules. Jesus came to tell them and He comes to tell us that they did not have to earn, and we do not have to earn, God's love; it is a free gift of His grace.

Many people still struggle, thinking themselves not worthy of God's love, believing that they have to earn His favor, forever seeking more and more things to fill the void in their lives — that God-shaped void that we all have — that can only be filled by a close personal relationship with Christ Jesus.

William Barkley translates that verse this way: “Come unto me all you who are exhausted and weighted down beneath your burdens, and I will give you rest. The better translation for this word *rest* is the word *relief*. I will give you relief for your anxiety. I will give you deliverance for your guilt and shame; I will give you release from your suffering; I will give you comfort in your sorrow.”

One source I read said it is the rest of conscience that follows the realization that the penalty for sin has been paid once and that God will not demand payment again.

*Take my yoke upon you*. The Jews used this phrase, *the yoke*, to mean entering into submission to. They spoke of the yoke of the law, or the yoke of the commandments, or the yoke of the kingdom or the yoke of God. “That is,” William Barkley said, “it may well be that Jesus took His words of invitation from something closer home than that. The yoke, we know, is a neck harness which enabled two oxen, or two animals of some kind, to pull a wagon or to carry a load along. The yokes were tailor made to fit the animals that were put into them. Enter into submission to His will. Turn over control of your life to Him. Take His yoke and learn from Me, as he says, as we say, ‘Yes, Lord, yes, to Your will and to Your ways,’ He trains us. We learn from Him. We are not left alone to carry life's burdens for Jesus has said, *I will never leave you nor forsake you*. He, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is the other person in that harness who helps us along life's way.”

And what will we find? Rest for our souls, relief from the burdens we carry, peace that passes understanding, all because we have allowed Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the one who comes along side to help us.

*My yoke is easy; my burden is light.* Another source I read said that this is a striking contrast to the Pharisees. Jesus said that the Pharisees bind heavy burdens, hard to bear and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves, the Pharisees themselves, will not move them with one of their fingers.

Jesus' yoke is easy; it does not chafe. Someone has suggested that if Jesus had a sign outside His carpenter's shop that it would read, "My yoke fits well."

My burden is light. This does not mean that there are no problems or no heartaches in the Christian life. But it does mean that we do not have to bear them alone. We are yoked with the One who gives sufficient grace for every time of need. To serve His is not bondage but perfect freedom.

"Come unto me all you who are tired, all you who are feeling drained, all you who are feeling empty, all you who are burdened by a sense of disappointment and letdown, all you who are exhausted by the struggles of life and weighed down by your sense of duty and of what is right and wrong, and I, Jesus, will give you rest."

Jesus will cleanse you. Jesus will fill you with new joy and establish you in a relationship with God that will give you new life here and in the world to come. Isn't that wonderful? Don't we have a wonderful Savior, and don't we have a glorious opportunity this Independence Sunday to celebrate all of our freedoms, not just the freedom to worship, but the freedom from the bondage, the guilt and shame of sin, all because of the price that Jesus paid on the cross. Amen.