

October 11, 2026
 Pursuing the Kingdom: The Invitation of Jesus
 Matthew 11:25-30
 Vernon Advent Christian Church

Are you tired this morning? We probably all are to some degree. But I'm not talking about tiredness from not getting a good night's sleep or from having a long week. Because there is a kind of tiredness that sleep doesn't fix. You can get eight hours of sleep and still wake up exhausted. You can take a day off and still feel tired. You can go on vacation and come home feeling like you need another vacation. Because there's a exhaustion that isn't simply physical. It is emotional and spiritual and its the weariness that comes from carrying things we were never meant to carry.

Some people are tired from trying to prove themselves. Some are tired from trying to keep everyone happy or from carrying guilt from the past. Some are tired because they have been trying to control everything. While others are tired because they have been carrying responsibilities that seem too heavy to bear.

And sometimes, even we, as believers, can become tired in our spiritual lives. And it's because we can turn following Jesus into a list of things we have to accomplish as a way to try and earn God's approval. Or we can measure ourselves against other people trying to keep up with them. Or we can become weary of what's going on around us, all of it beyond our control.

And into all of the weariness, tiredness and exhaustion, Jesus speaks some of the most beautiful words in all of Scripture. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, [or heavy burdened] and I will give you rest."

Jesus doesn't say, "Come to a religion." Or, "Come to a list of rules." He says, "Come to Me." That is the heart of the gospel. The gospel is not about what we can do for Jesus. It begins with what Jesus has done for us and then our response is a life of obedience to Him out of an abundance of gratitude for what He has done.

Now, last week, we saw where Jesus confronted the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum and had pronounced judgment on them because they had seen His miracles and had heard His message but refused to repent. And those same cities remain in ruins today. Now, in that very same discussion with the very same crowd, He now turns to those who are willing to come to Him and He gives them a simple invitation. And we see the One who calls us to pursue His kingdom is the same one who offers rest to weary souls in that pursuit. And so, if you are able, please stand with me as I read the word of God found in Matthew 11:25-30.

[Read Passage]

So, let's start back with the crowd Jesus is addressing. Despite witnessing His greatest miracles, the intellectual pride and self-righteousness of the crowds had prevented them from repenting. So, Jesus uses this moment to expose the contrast between human wisdom and understanding and what God has revealed in Jesus. And He does so by shifting to prayer in vs. 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.”

Notice who He addresses in His prayer, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” There is both intimacy and authority in that statement. Jesus demonstrates that God is relational, He calls Him “Father,” something that would have been considered radical and controversial in those days. But He is also transcendent, He is completely independent from His creation, as Jesus addresses him as “Lord of heaven and earth.” And more than that it reveals His heart is in perfect harmony with the Father’s will. What pleases the Father completely satisfies and brings joy to the Son.

Then Jesus continues in His prayer and says that it seemed good to God to hide these things from “the wise and understanding” and reveal them to “little children.” Now, Jesus isn’t condemning intelligence here. The Bible doesn’t teach that being educated or having knowledge is a bad thing. No, the problem isn’t knowledge. The problem is pride.

The “wise and understanding” that Jesus is describing here are those who believe they already know everything. They believe they can figure God out on their own terms. This refers primarily to the religious elite of the day who were too full of their own theology to recognize the Messiah standing in front of them.

And the “little children” are those who recognize their need, literally “babes” or the “untaught.” They come to God with humility. They aren’t saying, “God, I have everything figured out.” They’re saying, “God, I need You.” That’s where the kingdom begins.

Think about a child. A young child doesn’t usually worry about whether they have enough to survive. They trust their parents. When they’re hungry, they ask for food. When they’re frightened, they run to their mom or dad. When they don’t understand something, they ask. There is a humility and dependence there.

Jesus isn’t telling us to become “childish.” There’s already enough “childish” Christians out there. No, He’s telling us to become “childlike” in our dependence upon God. One of the greatest obstacles to faith is not difficulty in understanding. More often, it’s a false self-sufficiency. We say things like, “I can handle this on my own.” “I don’t need help.” “I’ll figure it out.” “I’ll fix it myself.” And Jesus, knowing that we can’t, says, “Come to Me.”

For, you see, the kingdom is not “achieved” but “received” by people who recognize that they cannot save themselves. There’s a saying out there that many falsely attribute to the Bible that says, “God only helps those who help themselves.” Not only is this not in the Bible, it’s theologically inaccurate. The truth is that God helps, and I would go further and say He saves, those who cannot help, or save, themselves.

You don’t come to Jesus because you have everything together. You come because you don’t. You don’t come because you’re strong enough. You come because you’re weak. You don’t come because you have earned grace. You come because you need grace. That is why the gospel is good news. Grace is only amazing to us when we recognize that we need it.

So with that in mind, Jesus continues by explaining that this truth is ultimately rooted in the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Look at vs. 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.” This is one of the most profound declarations of Jesus' divinity in the Gospels. Jesus is saying that there is a unique relationship between Himself and the Father. In John 10:30, Jesus says of Himself, “I and the Father are one.” One of the same essence and being. Jesus is making the claim that He is God in the flesh and by saying that all things have been handed over to Him, He's claiming total authority over creation, salvation and judgment.

And He goes on and says, “...no one truly knows the Father except through the Son.” You see, Jesus is not simply one teacher among many. He isn't just another religious leader. He isn't just another Rabbi who has some interesting things to say about God. No, Jesus is the very revelation of God. Yesterday at men's breakfast we talked about the 3 ways God reveals Himself, through creation, His word and through Jesus. Jesus is speaking of that third way here.

If you want to know what God the Father is like, look at God the Son, Jesus. If you want to know what God's heart toward sinners looks like, look at Jesus. Again, John records Jesus saying, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) That's an incredible claim. Jesus is saying, “If you want to know God, come to Me.”

And notice how personal that is. Being a Christian isn't primarily about knowing facts about God. It's about knowing God through Jesus. For you can know a lot of facts about someone by reading their biography without actually knowing that person. You can watch interviews, study their history and know an incredible amount of information about them. But that doesn't necessarily mean you have a relationship with them.

But, the fact is, and what Jesus is communicating to us through His prayer, is that no human intellect can understand the full mystery of the Son, and no one can naturally find their way to the Father. And the only way to bridge the gap between sinful humanity and a Holy God is through Jesus. The saving knowledge of God is not earned through spiritual searching or academic study and human intellect. It is an act of grace given by Jesus to the humble. This means a true, personal relationship with God comes exclusively through Jesus. For Jesus says, again, about Himself, “I am the Way, the Truth and The Life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” (John 14:6)

You see, Jesus isn't simply offering more information here. He is offering a relationship. That's why He says, “Come to Me” because the Christian life begins and ends with Jesus. We don't simply come to Jesus for forgiveness and then move on to something else. We come to Jesus for everything and there is nothing else. Which then brings us to perhaps the most familiar invitation Jesus ever gave in all of the scriptures. After explaining who He is, and His relationship to the Father, Jesus then tells us exactly what He wants us to do.

Vs. 28 says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is so much packed into that sentence.

Notice, first, the invitation. Jesus doesn't say, “Try harder.” He doesn't say, “Clean yourself up first.” He doesn't even say, “Get your life together and then come.” He simply says, “Come.” And what's implied is, “Come as you are.” That's God's grace.

And when He says, “All you who labor.” “All you who are heavy laden, or heavy burdened or weighted down by life,” theologian and author, D.A. Carson, makes the point

that, “labor [here] implies the burdens we take upon ourselves, and heavy laden implies the burdens others put upon us.”

That means the invitation is broad for this describes all of us. You don't have to be a certain type of person. You don't have to have a certain background. You don't have to have your life perfectly organized. If you're weary, come. If you're burdened, come. If you're broken, come. If you're guilty, come. If you're confused or have doubts, come. If you're exhausted from trying to carry life by yourself, come. Jesus drives none away. He calls all to Himself.

And then He makes a promise, “I will give you rest.” Not, “I might.” Not, “I will if you do all the right things.” But simply, “Come to Me and I will give you rest.” And this is a promise from Jesus Himself.

Imagine carrying a heavy backpack for miles. At first, you think, “I can handle this.” But then your shoulders begin to hurt. Then, as you and others keep putting more things in the backpack, your back begins to ache. Eventually, you begin looking for somewhere to put the thing down, but you can't. And just when you're too worn out and tired to go any further, someone comes along and says, “Let me carry that for you.” That's what Jesus is saying. “Give it to Me and find rest.”

But the problem is that many of us keep picking the backpack back up. We bring our burdens to Jesus in prayer and then take them back five minutes later. We say, “Lord, I give You my anxiety,” and then spend the next three hours worrying about it. We say, “Lord, I trust You,” and then immediately begin trying to control everything again.

But Jesus says, “Come to Me.” Not, “Come to Me occasionally.” Not, “Come to Me only when you're desperate.” But, “Come to Me” and remain, the biblical word here is “abide.” And there, in His presence, you will find rest. But Jesus doesn't simply tell us to come to Him and then leave us without direction. He tells us what that rest looks like when we come to Him.

Vs. 29, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.” At first, that sounds strange doesn't it? Jesus has just said, “I will give you rest.” Now He says, “Take My yoke upon you.” A yoke was a wooden harness used to connect animals, normally oxen, so they could pull a heavy load together. That doesn't sound like rest to me. So why would Jesus offer rest and then immediately talk about a yoke? Because Jesus is not offering a life of ease without responsibility. He's offering a life with the right Master.

In Jewish culture, “the yoke” was a common metaphor for submitting to the law or a Rabbi's teaching. Jesus was telling them to trade the crushing burdens of the religious leaders for His yoke. But Jesus is not telling them to pull a heavy cart alone. He is inviting them to step into the harness with Him.

You see, it was standard practice to yoke an older, experienced and disciplined ox together with a young, untrained calf. The young calf did not know how to plow a straight line, how to pace itself, or when to stop. Left alone, it could burn out, wander off or injure itself.

But, by being yoked to the older ox, the calf was forced to walk at the experienced ox's pace and direction. The older animal did all the heavy pulling and steering. All the calf had to do was stay aligned with it. This is exactly what Jesus means by, “Take my yoke... and

learn from me." He is the mature, steady ox. As His disciples, we step into the harness next to Him, learning how to walk, live and pace our lives by matching His stride.

The truth is everyone carries a yoke. The question is not whether you will carry one but whose yoke will you carry. The world has its yokes. But Jesus says, "Take My yoke." Because His yoke is different. And when we are yoked to Jesus, we're no longer carrying life alone. He walks with us. He leads us. He teaches us and He strengthens us. Jesus doesn't simply give us a destination. He gives us Himself as our teacher and our guide.

Then Jesus explains why His yoke is different from the one we so often place upon ourselves.

He says, "For I am gentle and lowly in heart..." This may be one of the most beautiful descriptions Jesus ever gives of Himself. Think about how Jesus could have described Himself. He could have said, "I am all powerful." He could have said, "I am sovereign." He could have said, "I am King of Kings and Lord of Lords." And those things are all true. But when Jesus describes His heart, He says, "I am gentle and lowly."

Some years ago, we made a book available to any who wanted one called, "Gentle and Lowly" by Dane Ortlund. We still have a copy available in the library if you would like to read more about this topic.

You see, unlike the demanding, proud religious leaders of the day, Jesus presents Himself as approachable, kind and patient. He does not scold those who stumble. He gently guides them. Jesus is not harsh with the brokenhearted. He is not impatient with those who come to Him in weakness. He is not irritated by our need. He is gentle.

These words carry the idea of meekness and strength under control. Jesus has all authority, yet He is gentle. He is Lord of heaven and earth, yet He invites weary sinners to draw near. He is holy, yet He welcomes sinners. He is all powerful, yet He is compassionate. Again, at the Men's breakfast yesterday, we marveled at how God created all the billions of stars and galaxies and yet he knows us intimately. That's the heart of Jesus.

And then He also says and, "...you will find rest for your souls." Notice that Jesus doesn't simply promise physical rest. He promises rest for the soul. That's deeper. Physical rest can restore your body. But only Jesus can restore your soul.

Like I said earlier, you can take a vacation and still be anxious. You can sleep and still be discouraged. You can change your circumstances and still carry guilt. You can be successful and still feel empty. Because the deepest need of the human soul isn't simply rest from work. It's reconciliation with Almighty God.

Saint Augustine once famously said, "[The human heart] is restless until [it finds its] rest in [God]." That's what Jesus is offering. Rest at the deepest level. Rest from trying to earn God's love. Rest from carrying the burden of sin. Rest from the exhausting pursuit of trying to prove yourself. Rest from believing that everything depends on you. Rest because Christ has done what we could never do. Again, I ask, "Are you tired and weary?" Then come to Jesus and find your rest in Him.

Jesus finishes His invitation with one final statement that brings everything together. Vs. 30 says, "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Now, let's be honest. Following Jesus doesn't always feel easy and light, does it? Jesus Himself said that following Him involves taking up our cross. So what does He mean here?

Well, Jesus is not promising that following Him will never be difficult. He's saying that His yoke is good, fitting and life-giving compared with the crushing burdens we carry apart from Him. Life has challenges, yes, but there is a difference between carrying a burden with Christ and carrying a burden without Him.

There is a difference between suffering while knowing that God is with us and suffering while believing that we're alone. There is a difference between obeying Christ because you love Him and trying to earn God's approval by going through all the motions. Jesus isn't giving us another ladder we have to climb to reach God. No, He's giving us Himself.

And that's why His yoke is easy. The Christian life isn't effortless. But it's filled with the grace of God. It isn't painless. But it has purpose. It isn't always comfortable. But it is never meaningless. No, Jesus doesn't promise us a life without burdens but He promises that we will never have to carry them alone.

As Jesus' conversation with the crowd comes to a close, it began with Jesus confronting people who had seen His works but refused to repent. Now it ends with Jesus extending the invitation to all who would listen, "Come to Me."

And what a contrast. The One who warns the rebellious crowds is the same One who welcomes the weary and heavy burdened. The One who confronts sin is the One who offers forgiveness. The One who calls us to repentance is the One who offers us rest.

And perhaps that's exactly what we need to hear today. Maybe you've been trying to carry everything in your life by yourself. Maybe you're exhausted from trying to be good enough. Maybe you're carrying guilt and shame from your past. Maybe you're carrying a burden that you've never been willing to surrender to Jesus.

Jesus doesn't say, "Fix yourself up and then come." He offers everyone the same invitation, "Come to Me." The invitation of the gospel is not to "work harder." It is not to "become more religious." It is not to "make yourself worthy." It is to "come to Jesus and find rest for your soul."

So, come with your sin. Come with your weakness. Come with your failures. Come with your questions. Come with your burdens. And find rest.

For the cross demonstrates to us that Jesus has already done what we could never do for ourselves. He paid the price for our sin. He took our guilt upon Himself. He died in our place. And His resurrection declares that death could not hold Him.

So if you have never trusted and surrendered your life to Jesus, today you can come. Turn from your sin, today. Put your faith in Jesus, today. Receive His forgiveness, today. And enter into the rest that only He can give.

And if you already belong to Christ, hear His invitation again. "Come to Me all you are weary and heavy laden... and I will give you rest." Not come and go, but abide in Him. Not only when life falls apart, but daily. Keep walking with Him. Keep learning from Him. Continue to take His yoke upon you, trust Him and discover that the One who calls you to pursue His kingdom is also the only One who can give rest to your soul. Let's pray.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You that when we are weary and burdened, You don't turn us away. You invite us to come.

Lord, we come to You today. We bring You our burdens, our fears, our failures, our worries and our sin. Forgive us for the times when we have tried to carry what belongs in Your hands. Forgive us for trying to control what only You can control.

Teach us to take Your yoke and learn from You. Teach us to live with humility, gentleness, faith and obedience. Help us to trust You when we don't understand. Help us to follow You when the road is difficult. Help us to pursue Your kingdom without losing sight of Your grace.

Lord, give according to your promise. For those who are weary, give them rest. For those who are broken, bring healing. For those who are carrying guilt, remind them of the forgiveness found in Jesus. For those who are anxious, give them peace. And for those who have never trusted You, draw them to Yourself today.

We ask this in the powerful and precious name of Jesus, Amen.

Benediction:

May you come to Jesus with humble hearts, trust Him with your burdens and learn to walk in His gentle and gracious ways. May He give rest to your souls and strength for the journey as you take His yoke and faithfully pursue His kingdom. Go in the peace and rest of Jesus. Amen.