

“REST FOR THE WEARY”

Read Matthew 11:25-30

In Matthew 11:25-30, Jesus uses three imperative verbs to teach us where to find rest and how to keep it: “Come, take, learn.”

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Labor means hard work. Heavy laden means to be weighed down. It’s interesting to see how the Bible uses these words—labor, heavy laden—in other contexts. For example, Acts 27:10 uses the same Greek word for “heavy laden” to describe the heavy cargo of a ship. Luke 5 uses the same Greek word for “labor” to describe how the Lord’s disciples toiled all night without catching a single fish.

While Jesus was not talking about cargo and fishing when He invited us to come to Him for rest, these images graphically illustrate the way in which we often go through life. How many of us are carrying problems around like the cargo of a ship, setting sail but never reaching port, sinking lower and lower into the deep water of frustration and despair? How many of us are laboring at something without seeing any results—laboring to repair a troubled marriage; to resist temptation; to beat an addiction; to live with pain and loss?

In Romans 7 Paul describes another type of hard labor that often leaves us worn out and frustrated; namely, the war within us, that is, the war between our old and new natures—the sincere desire to please God, and the obvious failure to do so. Read carefully, and you can almost sense the frustration in Paul’s words: **I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am!**” His experience is our experience.

Amid such heavy weights and hard labor, doesn’t the invitation of Jesus sound wonderful? Isn’t it exactly what we’ve longed for and needed? Yet, what did the Savior mean by rest? Did He mean physical rest or spiritual rest? That spiritual rest is the primary emphasis is clear from Matthew 11:29, where Jesus said, “**And you will find rest for your souls**”—that deep, inner part of our being that cannot be reached or rejuvenated by Ambien or Lunesta or eight hours of uninterrupted



sleep; that deep, inner part of us that can only be satisfied and find rest in Jesus Christ.

But along with offering spiritual rest, Jesus almost certainly included the promise of physical rest. Physical and spiritual rest are connected. If you are tossing and turning on the inside, you are likely tossing and turning in your bed. I’m not suggesting that turning to Christ is a magic cure for insomnia. However, if you and I were willing to give our burdens, worries, and fears to the Lord instead of chewing on them like a worn-out, tasteless piece of bubblegum, wouldn’t we sleep better? Of course. David wrote in Psalm 4: “**I will lie down and sleep in peace, because You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.**”

Are you laboring and heavy laden? Are you weary and seeking rest? If so, look no farther than Matthew 11:25-30. In this section of Scripture, Jesus uses three imperative verbs to teach us where to find rest and how to keep it. The imperatives are: “**Come to Me,**” verse 28; “**Take My yoke,**” verse 29; and in the same verse, “**Learn from Me.**” Come, take, learn. Or said differently, invitation, application, education.

“Come to Me”

Why come to Jesus when you are laboring and heavy laden? Because there is no other place to find true rest and peace. “**I am the way,**” said Jesus; and this statement is as true of finding rest as it is of finding salvation. Any other means of obtaining rest—fame, fortune, relationships, careers, narcotics, alcohol; the recommendations of the worldly wise and prudent—are but temporary at best and destructive at worst.

If you own a computer with internet service, go to a search engine and type in the phrase “how to find inner peace.” You’ll find millions of websites with millions of suggestions. The Bible has but one solution, and it’s in the imperative: “If you want rest, come to Jesus.”

“Take My Yoke.”

If “come to Me” is an invitation, then “take My yoke” is an application. You and I know where to find answers in life, the Bible; yet, we don’t always take those answers to heart. We hear the invitation of Jesus, “Come to Me for rest,” but we don’t always come. Why? I’m not certain. Perhaps our first inclination is to search for rest on our own. Or perhaps the Bible seems too small and weak when compared to the magnitude of our burdens and labors. “Sure,” we think, “the Bible is fine for Sunday School and little children; but not for adults living in a grownup world of grownup problems—wars, terrorism, sickness, divorce, addictions, bankruptcies, foreclosures.”

This was the same sort of ‘grown-up pretentiousness’ that Jesus opposed when He prayed, “**I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.**” The Greek word

translated as “babes” can mean infants and little children; but it can also mean childlike. Not childish, but childlike. When we come to Jesus with the trust of a little child, ignoring sight and living by faith; knowing that He loves us, has redeemed us, and will never leave us—then and there we realize the promise of God’s rest.

“**Take My Yoke,**” said Jesus. Take it. Wear it. Use it. Apply it. “**For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” The word translated “easy” literally means “well fitting.” When we follow Christ and believe in Him, we’ll find that His Word perfectly fits our every need.

“Learn from Me.”

If you could name one thing more than any other that worries, wearies, and robs you of sleep, wouldn’t it be uncertainty. All those “what if” questions. What if I get sick? What if I die? What if I lose my job or retirement? The list is endless. And at the heart of this list is the assumption that God is sleeping, vacationing, or indifferent to our burdens and labors. Is this the God revealed in Scripture? No.

We can understand why Jesus said, “**Learn from Me.**” For it is through Jesus Christ that we have the fullest revelation of WHO God is and WHAT God is like—the God who sacrificed His only Son to redeem us from our sins. And when we view God in this way, we will stop asking “What if?” and start confessing “No matter what!”

If you are laboring and heavy laden, heed the personal invitation of Jesus. Come to Him. Partake of Him. Learn from Him. For the outcome is certain. “**I will give you rest,**” said Jesus. “**You will find rest for your souls.**”

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