

MATTHEW 11:28-30**GOING TO MAKE IT ?**

Come unto me, all ye [you] that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye [you] shall find rest unto your souls.

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

“Are you going to make it”? That’s a question one would ask someone carrying five gallons of gas a half mile down the road to his thirsty pick-up. Or an ailing family member trying to make it from the bedroom to the bathroom. Or someone with a “bum” leg, or cracked ribs. A busy mom with a to-do list “three days” long. A rancher pulled in four different directions in one day. Etc.

What’s the burden that you are carrying today? Something physical as above, or maybe a poor decision, yesterday or last week, that has come back at great expense? Or a guilty conscience that keeps drumming at you, “The Lord is not happy with your sin, or with you.” Burdens caused by someone else are bad enough, but the worst burdens are the self-inflicted ones. Does your heart cry out, “Give me a break!” “This is ‘killing’ me.” “Please help!”

Jesus says, *Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give your rest.* The Greek word translated “labor” means “to be tired, to be weary, to work hard.” That Greek word in turn comes from another Greek word “to smite, to strike.” If you’ve given it “all you got,” and you are beaten down, empty, and don’t know which way to turn; then life is truly “labor,” is it not? “Heavy laden.” A bill of “lading” records the freight items that have been loaded on a truck, train, ship, etc. Imagine an iron-ore ship on Lake Superior at harbor in Minnesota or Upper Michigan. As the ship is being loaded / laden with iron ore pellets, the ship begins to sink lower and lower into the water. When the ship is fully loaded or overloaded, imagine the difference it makes trying to propel it or to steer it. It takes a lot more power to move a heavy laden ship. Surely you’ve experienced this with your tractor or pick-up. Jesus here talks to those who are “heavy laden” in life. It takes a lot of work and power just to keep going, more than you seem to have. Jesus is particularly talking to all trying to manage a sin-infected life before God. Does anyone want to hear the gavel go down in the courtroom of life—“Guilty as charged! To the dungeons and fire of hell you go!” Someone, give me a break!

Jesus is talking to everyone—not just to the dead-beat dad, the domineering woman, or rascal-of-a-teen—who have hit dead end. He’s talking to “all,” to you, ” struggling to survive physically, and struggling to survive spiritually before God. He’s talking to you. laboring along in life, buried in the never win battle of life, loaded to the gills with offenses before Him.

To all, to you, Jesus says, “Come to Me.” Here’s an open invitation from His heart. “Come to Me.” Do you know how significant this is? Without His invitation, you don’t stand a chance to appear with acceptance before the Father. It’s like Queen Esther in the book of Esther. Esther was the Jewish wife of the Persian King Xerxes (also rendered Ahasuerus). She went before her husband, the king, to plead for her people, who by a plot of the wicked Persian official Haman, were due for extermination. She went, knowing full well that unless invited by the king, any subject appearing before him was liable to be executed—unless the king extended the scepter to him. ---- In a degree beyond that, to stand before the Lord, there is not one sinner who has a sliver of a chance to be accepted. None are good enough. Uninvited, they are tossed—“given the thumb” in baseball jargon “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “There is none that does good, no not one” (Romans 3:10).

BUT . . . , you are invited by Jesus! to come to the throne of grace, to the throne and mercy seat of the Father's undeserved love and forgiveness. *Come unto me, all ye [you] that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest.* "Come," literally simply "Here." When little Stevie falls down, his mom says with extended arms and love in her voice, "Here, I will kiss it." An invitation of comfort and love. Jesus invites the struggling sinner—you—on the path to eventual death, "Here." "Come to Me." "I have fixed it."

In Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats, He appears on earth on the last day. To the sheep, those who cling to Him by faith and serve Him in that faith, He says, "Come!" "Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" (Matthew 25:34). A blessed, wonderful, undeserved invitation to stand before the King with full acceptance! Similarly, when Joseph's brothers stood before him in Egypt, and Joseph revealed who he was, they were afraid because of what they had done to him twenty years earlier. He said, "Come near to me" (Genesis 45:4) and encouraged their hearts.

Jesus is calling and inviting you to His side, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). Jesus invites you, in your great need, in your daily battle to survive in this life, and in your daily quest somehow to find acceptance before the Father. He says, "Come . . . and I will give you rest." Ahh, Rest! What a pleasant and inviting thought—a good night's sleep, a short nap (certainly not in church??), a cool drink of water on a hot day, ten minutes in the shade and the breeze, standing around a warm fire. Our English word "pause" is directly tied to the Greek word for "rest." Pause, take a break, catch your breath, wipe your brow. Jesus gives us Pause, a Break, Rest. It is more than physical. It is spiritual—"rest for your soul." The Father says even to you, "Your record is cleared for My Son's sake. All your misdeeds were laid on Him and are forgiven. You have a clean slate." The gift is yours daily, hourly, in Jesus. There is Rest and Peace in Jesus—even when death comes.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye [you] shall find rest unto your souls. The "yoke" that Jesus is talking about is not the "yolk" of an egg! A "yoke" is a device used to hitch two oxen together side by side as a team. The old yoke was a wooden frame, worn about each neck—on the order of joined horse collars—so the two could pull together on a wagon or a plow or anything. The yoke that binds us to Jesus in this life and in our hearts is the yoke of faith, the trust in Him as the one Rescuer or Redeemer from the predicament of sin and sinful life in this sinful world. See what He has done and completed for you! Forgiveness and Salvation! He is not an evil master or dictator, but is meek, mild, lowly, humble in heart. He does not pair you up with Himself so He can drag you around and make life tough on you. He pairs up with you so He can give you REST. He has done all the work! His blood and death have paid your ransom for you. He has done so because He is concerned about, and loves, helpless you. He has "beaten" death for you and risen from the grave in victory; you too will rise from the grave and be taken to heaven, righteous, pure, and acceptable. He gives REST for your heart and soul—peace and assurance. Glory awaits through Him.

My yoke is easy, and my burden is light. It's light, because He does all the work. You just walk along beside as His partner. Will you make it through the struggles of life, through the gloom of death, through the day of reckoning on Judgment Day? With Jesus, Yes! He it is who invites you! Peace and Rest. Rest in Peace!

Amen! So be it!

---Pastor Kanzenbach