

The Invitation of Jesus

Matthew 11:28-30

Ryan Cole

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This morning is the last sermon I will deliver as the campus minister of Greenwood Park Church of Christ and Hilltoppers for Christ. I've thought a lot about what my last message to you will be. I feel at peace with this being my last message. And my prayer is that if you forget everything else I've ever said, you'd remember this:

Following Jesus is absolutely worth it.

Matthew 11:28-30

- And if I were to choose a text to discuss the worthiness of following Jesus, how amazing His invitation to follow Him is, and how good Jesus really is, it would be *Matthew 11:28-30*.
- A.W. Tozer - "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."¹
 - Every implication of our lives flows through this.
- I am convinced that this is the most important question in the world: "What is God like?"
- *Matthew 11:28-30* is a passage of scripture that answers that question for us. It tells us what Jesus' heart is like, how we relate to Him, and even more importantly, how He relates to us.
- Dane Ortlund makes this observation about *Matthew 11:28-30*:
 - "In the four gospel accounts given to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John--eighty-nine chapters of biblical text--there's only one place where Jesus tells us about his own heart."² And that's *Matthew 11:28-30*.
 - This passage, perhaps more than just about any other in all of the New Testament, we get a clear picture of the heart of Jesus.

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."³

Matthew 11:28-30 from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this text in *The Message*

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperOne, 1961), 1.

² Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 17.

³ All biblical references, unless otherwise indicated, in this document are taken from the New International Version (NIV). *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Matthew 11:28-30

Matthew 11:28 - Come to me,

- Think about this phrase for a moment. Think about this invitation of Jesus. What is Jesus inviting you to?
- Jesus is inviting you to Himself.
- Jesus has a lot to offer. He could offer you some sound and good advice. He could offer you something physically valuable. He could have offered you a task. But He offered you Himself.
- This is at the core of the Gospel message, the good news of Jesus. Jesus has come to earth to present Himself to you.
- Coming to Jesus, being present with Jesus is His invitation to you.
- It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, grew up in church or this is your first time in a church building, or what you did last night; the invitation of Jesus is made available for you.
- For some of you, this first phrase is the most important phrase you need to hear is "Come to me." Know that this invitation of Jesus is there. You can come to Jesus today, and we are more than happy and eager to help you with that.

Matthew 11:28 - all you who are weary and burdened,

- So who is this invitation to come to Jesus for particularly? Those who are weary and burdened.
- So many people are weary and burdened at this time.
- Mental health is an epidemic in our country in our generation. Anxiety and depression are at an extremely high level.
- Quotes from Max Lucado's book, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World*
 - "According to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders are reaching epidemic proportions. In a given year nearly fifty million Americans will feel the effects of a panic attack, phobias, or other anxiety disorders."⁴
 - "Anxiety disorders in the United States are the 'number one mental health problem among...women and are second only to alcohol and drug abuse among men."⁵
 - "The United States is now the most anxious nation in the world."⁶
 - Anxiety is a part of the American culture. "Citizens in other countries ironically enjoy more tranquility. They experience one-fifth the anxiety levels of Americans, despite having fewer of the basic life necessities...When these less-anxious developing-world citizens immigrate to the United States, they tend to get just as anxious as Americans. Something about our particular way of life, then, is making us less calm and composed."⁷

⁴ Max Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 5.

⁵ Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing*, 5.

⁶ Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing*, 6.

⁷ Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing*, 6.

- In a study of over 200,000 college freshman research showed that “students reported all-time lows in overall mental health and emotional stability.”⁸
- “The average [American] child today exhibits the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the 1950s.”⁹
- We as a culture have a major problem with anxiety, depression and overall mental health.
- Mental health is an epidemic in our country in our generation.
- Even if there’s no serious mental health issues, everyone has so much going on. When someone asks you, “How are you?” the most common answer from most of us would be “We’re good, but busy.”
- A recent study where people would randomly ping people on their phone and ask them, “What are you doing?” and “How happy are you right now?” People’s minds were wandering 47% of the time to either the past or future.¹⁰
 - 47% of waking life, on average, people are not living in the moment, but are preoccupied with what already happened or what will happen. Nearly 50% of waking life we are not present.
 - It was also discovered that a wandering mind is not a happy mind. People are happier when they are living in the present.
- We don’t live in an emotionally/mentally healthy culture.
- But there is an invitation from Jesus. He invites us to come to Him and receive rest.

Matthew 11:28 - and I will give you rest.

- Who needs rest?
- Many college students just finished finals week and are in need of rest.
- How great is rest? It’s the best!
 - One of the best feelings is going to bed and not having to set an alarm for the next morning.
- Do you even remember what it feels like to be well-rested? Do you remember what it is like to be bored?
- Most of us could use some rest, and not just physical rest, but spiritual and emotional rest. (those of us who are up all hours of the night worrying and overthinking)
- Are you tired of striving? Tired of trying to earn your keep, earn others’ love, or earn your identity?
- Are you tired of having to live up to expectations?
 - society’s expectations
 - having a certain car
 - vacations
 - clothes

⁸ Lucado, *Anxious for Anything*, 6

⁹ Lucado, *Anxious for Anything*, 6.

¹⁰ “That Anxiety You’re Feeling? It’s a Habit You Can Unlearn,” *The Ezra Klein Show*, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-ezra-klein-show/id1548604447?i=1000517873238>.

- many people go into debt to live up to society's many expectations
 - social media posts
- expectations of others
- expectations of yourself
- perceived expectations of God
- Most of us need a true rest, a true rest that is not found in our ability, number of hours worked or money earned, circumstance, social affirmation, acceptance or praise of others, or achievements, but a rest that only comes from your Maker, Redeemer, and Provider.

Matthew 11:29 - Take my yoke upon you

- Jesus invites us, His followers, to take His yoke and put it upon ourselves.
- Dane Ortlund - "A yoke is a heavy crossbar laid on oxen to force them to drag farming equipment through the field. Jesus is using a kind of irony, saying that the yoke of his disciples is a nonyoke."¹¹
- John Mark Comer - "A yoke was a common idiom in the first century for a rabbi's way of reading the Torah. But it was also more: It was his set of teachings on how to be human...It's an odd image for those of us who don't live in an agrarian society. But imagine two oxen yoked together to pull a cart or plow a field. A yoke is how you shoulder a load."¹²
- Jesus has an easy yoke.
- The way and teachings of Jesus help us through life. It's a new lifestyle. He gives us a framework through His life and teachings for His followers to navigate this life and world.
 - Sermon on the Mount - *Matthew 5-7*
- Let me be clear. Jesus is not saying that life will be easy if you follow Him and take up His yoke. He actually says the opposite.
 - When He invites people to follow Him, He tells them to pick up their crosses to follow Him (*Matthew 16:24*).
 - Life will not be easier when you follow Jesus and take His yoke, but He will give you tools to thrive in the midst of the craziness of the world.
- Jesus offers you a way of life, His way, the way of Jesus, that offers peace and rest even in the midst of carrying crosses, hard work, pain, and suffering.

Matthew 11:29 - and learn from me,

- Notice the emphasis Jesus puts on learning.
- The Great Commission - *Matthew 28:19-20* - go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
- Jesus is a teacher (rabbi). He is much more than a teacher. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, a member of the Trinity, but nevertheless, He is a teacher.

¹¹ Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, 22.

¹² John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2019), 77.

- We, as His disciples, are lifelong learners of Jesus. We will forever be His students. Like and apprentice or intern, you learn from Jesus to be like Him.

Matthew 11:29 - for I am gentle and humble in heart,

- This is the heart of Jesus. Jesus is gentle. Jesus is humble.
- If someone were to ask you, "What is the heart of Jesus?" This the text you bring them to.
- So what is His heart like?
- Jesus is gentle.
 - Jesus was the most gentle human to ever live.
 - Dane Ortlund - "Meek. Humble. Gentle. Jesus is not trigger-happy. Not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated. He is the most understanding person in the universe. The posture most natural to him is not a pointed finger but open arms."¹³
 - Jesus is approachable and accessible.
 - Think of His approachability.
 - Little children were comfortable going to Him (*Matthew 19:13-15*).
 - Sinners were drawn to Him (*Luke 15:1*)
 - Tax collectors were compelled to come to Him (*Luke 15:1*)
 - Lepers felt drawn to Him (*Mark 1:40*)
 - Even Pharisees were intrigued by this traveling Rabbi named Jesus. (*John 3:1-2*)
 - Now, don't mistake Jesus as a fragile or weak person for being gentle. (Note what he said right before He says these words. *Matthew 11:20-24*) He was gentle, but He was also the most powerful being to ever exist.
 - Power and gentleness are not mutually exclusive.
- Jesus is humble.
 - *Philippians 2:5-8* - In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!
 - Even though He was worthy of all the praise and worship in the universe and was seated at the right hand of God and the most powerful being, He humbled Himself and came to earth for us.
 - There was never a job Jesus would be "too good" for.
 - He also made time for everyone. He was never too good or too busy to help someone.
 - *Mark 5:25-34*

¹³ Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, 19.

Matthew 11:29 - and you will find rest for your souls.

- We need rest.
- God invented rest! God rested.
- God commanded His people to rest.
- Sabbath - Command number four in the Ten Commandments is about rest. God required the Israelites to rest. Since He rested, His people should rest. Since His people (the Israelites) were slaves and had to work non-stop seven days a week, God installed a day of rest for His people, because He loves them and people need rest!
- We need rest. We're tired. We're tired of the striving, tired of the guilt, tired of the anxiety and stress, tired of the guilt and shame, tired of the constant earning. We're tired of carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders. We're tired of carrying years and perhaps decades of shame and guilt. We need rest! And Jesus is eager to give you that rest, the rest you need.
- The only way we can find true rest is in Jesus.
- In Jesus we find rest and security.
 - We can rest in the forgiveness we receive from God.
 - You don't have to carry the weight of your mistakes, sins, guilt, or shame.
 - If you are in Christ, Jesus takes care of all of that!
 - We can rest in our identity.
 - If you put your identity in anything but Jesus, you will have identity crises.
 - Rest knowing that you are completely loved by God.
- Jesus is the true rest.

Matthew 11:30 - For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

- Again, coming to Jesus will cost us everything, but it is absolutely worth it.
- Let Jesus carry the burden for you. The burden is light because Jesus is doing the heavy lifting.
- He has great plans for your life.
- Jesus' way of doing things is much better than the world's ways of doing things.

Three Goals of Discipleship¹⁴ (taken from John Mark Comer's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*)

- When someone accepts Jesus' invitation of His yoke, we become His disciples. This means we are His followers. We are His apprentices. He is our teacher and we learn from Him.
- (A side note on discipleship) Disciples are life-long followers and learners of Jesus. Being a disciple is more than just making a one-time decision. Jesus doesn't make converts; He makes disciples. Discipleship is a life-long project of being formed

¹⁴ Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, 77.

into the image of Jesus. Discipleship is not a destination, but a life-long journey of transformation.

- A set of parents don't give birth in a delivery room, high five one another, and say, "We did it. We're parents. We're done!" That's just the beginning of parenthood! The goal of parenthood is not only to give birth to a kid. It's to help them grow and mature into godly adults.
- Similarly, the goal of a Christian is not ONLY baptism. Yes, baptism is a necessary part of a disciple's life; but that's just the beginning! Disciples are to grow and mature into the image of Jesus!
- As we accept the invitation to come to Jesus for true rest, let us consider these three goals of disciples of Jesus.
 - Be with Jesus.
 - Become like Jesus.
 - Do what He would do if He were you.

Be with Jesus.

- Jesus' invitation is "Come to me."
- The Great Commission - And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (*Matthew 28:20*)
- Jesus is always with you. Grow in awareness of His presence.

Become like Jesus.

- *2 Corinthians 3:18* - And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
- *Romans 8:29* - For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
- Are you more or less like Jesus than you were a year ago?

Do what He would do if He were you.

- I absolutely love this quote from Dallas Willard: "I need to be able to lead my life as he would lead it if he were I."¹⁵
- Jesus was not a welder, plumber, truck driver, lawyer, stay-at-home-mom, teacher, or retiree with six grandchildren. Beautiful Jesus were those things, how would He act? What would He do?

¹⁵ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 284.