

Important Invitations

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[0 : 0 0] Well, just for a few moments, we're going to turn to God's word. And this morning, we're going to be mainly looking at just one verse from Matthew chapter 11.

We're going to be looking at Matthew chapter 11, verse 28. And I'm going to put that verse up on the screen in just a few moments. Well, there's no doubt about it.

But this world has seen some important invitations. On May 10, 1940, during World War II, Prime Minister at the time, Neville Chamberlain, resigned.

And on that day, King George VI sent a personal invitation to a man named Winston Churchill, inviting him to become the new Prime Minister and to form a new government in the midst of war. Many people say that that invitation is one of the significant events in the history of World War II.

[1 : 1 1] This world has seen some important invitations. And we can only imagine how many more important invitations like this one have been issued by various different presidents and world leaders at various different times.

This world has seen some important invitations. On a different note, I recently came across a very different kind of important invitation.

I saw in the sporting world in the recent NFL American football draft that the University of Alabama quarterback, Bryce Young, was invited to play American football professionally for the Carolina Panthers on a four-year contract, earning him over \$41 million.

Now, that's not bad for throwing a ball around the place. I know there's a little bit more to it than that. But many would say that this was an important invitation.

So, whether it would be an invitation that would lead to altering the course of a world war, or whether it would be an invitation to come and to play sport, or to sing, or to act for millions, there's no doubt about it.

[2 : 3 7] This world has seen some important invitations. But there is one invitation that this world has seen, that in terms of its importance and its significance, well, it simply blows every other invitation in the history of the world out of the water.

In fact, the invitation that I have in mind this morning, I would suggest, is the most important invitation that this world has ever seen.

And the beauty of this invitation is, it has not just been given or issued to presidents, or to kings, or to elite professional athletes.

No, the beauty of this invitation is, it has been given to every single person, including each one of us, here this morning.

You know, you and I, we might never be given an invitation to lead a country, we might never be given an invitation to do something for millions, if you do remember me, but you and I, we have been given the most important invitation that this world has ever seen.

[3 : 5 9] And here it is. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. I would like us just to spend just a few minutes looking at this invitation, and just considering why it is so important, and why it is so incredible, and so significant.

So first, this invitation is so important, and so incredible, because of who this invitation is from.

This invitation is from Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth. Here in Matthew 11, it is Jesus of Nazareth who was out in the Galilee area, and he is preaching and teaching where many different people from all sorts of places, different types of people, have come to listen to his teaching.

So these words here in Matthew 11 are the words of Jesus of Nazareth. This invitation is from Jesus of Nazareth.

But what's so important about that? What's so special about that? Well, of course, Jesus of Nazareth is no ordinary person. Jesus of Nazareth is God the Son in human flesh.

[5 : 24] So to start with, what makes this invitation so important and so powerful and so incredible is that this is an invitation not from some ordinary person.

No, this invitation is from God the Son in human flesh, from the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Creator of the universe. So in terms of who is giving this invitation, it simply cannot and does not get any better than this.

This invitation is from God himself. It is from God the Son in human flesh. Well, to add to that, what makes this invitation so important and so incredible is what this invitation is to.

This is an invitation to come to Jesus. This is an invitation from Jesus to come to Jesus. This is not an invitation to come to a religion.

It's not an invitation to come to a set of rules. It's not an invitation to come to a church to a church or to a denomination. What makes this invitation so incredible and so important is it is an invitation to come to a person.

[6 : 58] Jesus said, come to me. This is an invitation to come to the person of Jesus. This invitation from God himself, from God the Son in human flesh is such a personal invitation.

It's such a relational invitation. It's an invitation to come to the person of Jesus. Jesus said, come to me.

Well, to add to that again, what makes this invitation so powerful and so incredible is who this invitation is for.

So it's an invitation from Jesus to come to Jesus and it is for all who are weary and burdened.

Now I think that the word all here is important. It is for all people. It was for all who were there that day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and it's for all of us who are here today in Skibbereen.

[8 : 07] It's not just for a special group. It's for all people who are weary and burdened. It's for all people. It's for all people. And it is for all people who are weary and burdened.

Now the weary and burdened that this verse, that this invitation is speaking about is not so much a physical weariness and burden.

Now if we look down at the next verse, verse 29 of this very chapter, we see that this weariness and burden is speaking about a soul weariness and burden.

One thing that we all definitely have here this morning is a soul. Now we all have souls on our shoes as well, I hope.

I'm not talking about that kind of soul. But one thing we all have is a soul, as in our inner being. We all have a physical body and we all have a soul, the part of us, if you like, that is not physical.

[9 : 20] And so this invitation is an invitation for all who are weary and burdened and anxious and hopeless and restless and down on the inside in the part of us that is not physical.

And here is the thing I think about that. Because God made each one of us in his image to know him, well if we don't know him, well then there will be deep in our soul somewhere an emptiness, a hopelessness, a restlessness, a lack of peace.

Because we're made in God's image to know him, if we don't know him, well then there will be a weariness and a burden in our soul as we go through life with no lasting freedom, no lasting purpose, no lasting hope, and no lasting peace.

So Jesus' invitation is for all who are weighed down on the inside in their soul with the weight of no real lasting freedom, hope, and purpose.

In many ways it is for all who are weighed down in their soul by the weight of not yet truly knowing Jesus. well if this is you and if just this morning you sense in your soul, you sense on the inside that you are weary and burdened, that you don't have a lasting peace, a freedom, a purpose, well the good news is this, the amazing news is this, because there is an amazing promise in this invitation for anyone who would accept this invitation and come to Jesus.

[11 : 27] What ultimately makes this invitation so important and so incredible and so powerful is the promise that is there for anyone who comes to Jesus.

For those who come to Jesus with a weary and burdened soul, they will receive rest. Jesus said, come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

Now this rest is an amazing word, it also points to freedom, it points to liberation, it points to relief. So for anyone who comes to Jesus with a weary and burdened soul, with an anxious, restless, no peace in their heart soul, the promise is when we come to Jesus we will receive rest, relief, liberation and freedom that this world simply cannot give.

Because when we come to Jesus he will set our soul free from the weight of judgment and sin. When we come to Jesus he takes our sin and he gives us his righteousness making us right in God's eyes.

When we come to Jesus he makes us new creations in him. When we come to Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit who lives in us to lead us and to guide us. When we come to Jesus he gives us his living water that will quench the deepest thirst in our souls for lasting meaning, purpose fulfillment. [13 : 09] When we come to Jesus he sets our soul free. And this has been the testimony of people in every century and in every corner of the world.

One example of this is the story of a teenage boy from India. This Indian lad in his teenage years struggled with a sense of just wondering is there more to life than what this world can offer. You know he was struggling just wondering is there more to life than just working living and dying. He said that he didn't really have any lasting freedom or peace or hope beyond this world in his soul.

And he was really struggling with that. But one day he came across a Bible and he came across this very verse and also some verses like it.

And the Lord simply used these words and words like this from God's word to speak to his heart and to show this teenage boy that it was only in Jesus that he could find this hope and this peace and this freedom.

[14 : 25] So this teenage boy became a follower of Jesus. He became a Christian. His soul was set free. Now at that time he might not have got 41 million dollars but he got something that is far more precious than that.

His soul was set free and he knew Jesus which lasts far beyond this life. Well in parts of India and in other parts of the world I would imagine if you become a believer sadly often your family will cut you off or shun you or sadly even kill you at times.

So for four years this teenage boy kept his faith to himself. He kept the fact that Jesus had set his soul free to himself. He knew what might happen to him if someone found out if his family found out. Well after four years of keeping this to himself he felt that the time was right and the Lord was prompting him to tell his family the truth. Just to tell his family that he was a Christian and that he had been set free.

So he decided the next day that's what he would do. He would tell his father the truth. It was just God's timing. So the next day he told his father I am a Christian.

[15 : 55] And I found this peace and this hope that I didn't have before. Well as the father heard the words coming from his son's mouth I am a Christian.

His head dropped. And he said to his son you are no longer my son. You now mean nothing to me. I want nothing more to do with you. And you must tell nobody about this. Well two days later the father came back to his son and he said to his son I now know that your God is very very powerful because two nights ago I put enough poison in your dinner to kill 20 camels but you are still alive and I know that your God is very powerful and I want to know your God too.

So the son said something along the lines of my God says to you today come to me. And this father came to Jesus.

He relied on what Jesus did for him and his soul was set free. This father was actually set free from a life of trying to earn some sort of a reward when he died.

[17 : 22] but he relied on what Jesus did for him and he was set free. Looking at our lives we might not get an invitation to lead a country.

We might not get an invitation to do something for millions but each one of us we have been given a far more precious invitation than any of that.

We have been given if you like the invitation of all invitations by the king of kings and by the lord of lords to come to know him. to come to know him to be saved by him so that we can find rest and freedom deep in our souls.

But the thing about any invitation is of course it needs to be accepted. Invitations need to be accepted. This is a free invitation from Jesus but it does need to be accepted.

And this is for certain. I'll just finish with this. This is for certain. Jesus is not going to force anyone to accept this invitation that he has given to each one of us.

[18 : 38] Jesus doesn't force. No, instead he gently and kindly offers. In fact, looking again if you've got a Bible open at the very next verse, verse 29, the very next verse after this one, Jesus

describes himself as gentle and humble in heart, as gentle and lowly in heart.

This is the only time we see in scripture, this is the only time in the gospels where Jesus himself actually describes his own heart to us.

This is the only time in the gospels where Jesus tells us about his own heart. And this is what he said. He tells us that he is gentle and lowly in heart.

This is who Jesus is from his own lips. So if we don't know Jesus as incredibly gentle and lowly, if we don't know him as incredibly kind and humble, well then we are not truly seeing who he really is. In fact, someone said if we don't know Jesus as gentle and lowly, we don't truly know who he is at all. Jesus, the sender of this invitation, God himself in human flesh, is incredibly gentle and lowly in heart.

[20 : 20] And this is reflected in his invitation to us because his invitation to us is so kind, it's so inclusive, it's so caring, it's so compassionate, it's so thoughtful, it's so generous.

It is for all to come to him who are weary and burdened and he promises rest, for our souls.

And so just to finish, if you haven't yet come to know Jesus in this way, as gentle and lowly, as the one who can give peace and hope to our souls, I would encourage you to do so and to accept his kind, caring, generous invitation to you so that you can find this saving and sustaining rest and freedom for your soul that will last far beyond this life.

But if you're here this morning and if you have already found this saving and sustaining rest in Jesus, well then for you, you can rejoice.

You can freshly rejoice for you have been set free and for those who have been set free, they are free indeed. Let's pray together.

[21 : 42] Lord, we thank you so much for your word and for how you speak to us through your word. Thank you that your word shows us just this incredible invitation that you have given to us to come to you, to know you so we can be set free.

And thank you that you are gentle and lowly in heart. thank you that you do not force, but you kindly invite. Lord, I just pray you would help us to either take this invitation or you would help us to freshly rejoice in the freedom and the rest that we already have in you.

So Lord, we want to worship you and praise you. Help us just to respond to you now as we sing to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.