

Coming To Jesus (Matthew 11:25-30)

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Date: 26 October 2014

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[0:00] The passage is Matthew chapter 11, starting with verse 25. Please turn to your Bibles. Don't look at me. It's not written on my face.

It is written in your scriptures. And we need to follow it carefully. I want you to see it so you don't think I'm making this up. It really is written in the scriptures.

I'm sure you know by now that this is an election year and that there are many opinions about so many things and there are almost as many opinions as there are commentators who would like to state an opinion about everything.

In Wisconsin, I suppose one of the issues is, is Governor Walker good or is he bad? Is he helping the economy or is he discouraging the economy?

Is he creating jobs or is he not creating jobs? Is he good to education or is he bad to education?

And of course, your answer depends on whom you listen to.

[1:04] And there are some who say one thing and some who say something else. And then we have political parties, the Republicans, the Democrats, the Tea Party, the Green Party, the Massouh Party.

You know, I'm the only member of that party. You know, so there are many opinions about so many things. And at the time of Jesus, it wasn't that much different.

You had all kinds of parties with people with various views. You had the Sadducees who were basically priests who thought it was okay to cooperate with Rome.

You had the Zealots who were militants and who said the exact opposite. It's not okay to cooperate with Rome. You had the Pharisees who emphasized the study of the law.

But you also had the Chassidim who are not mentioned often in the New Testament, but who were the primary opponents, the primary enemies of the Pharisees.

[2:10] When you read intertestamental period, the Talmud and things like that, you think Jesus was harsh on the Pharisees. He was mild compared to what the Chassidim said.

There's a famous section about the 11 great hypocrisies of the Chassidim. You know, I mean, it's creative, to say the least. And then you had the people of the land, Ham Haaretz.

And so you could ask them, what should we do? And you got as many opinions as there were parties and rabbis to think and discuss.

Into the scene appears Jesus. And it looks like this is just another opinion in a milieu of many opinions.

And it's easy to think, well, that is his view. But, you know, why shouldn't I trust the Zealots more?

[3:13] Why should I accept Jesus? Why should I not accept the Sadducees or the Ham Haaretz? So I want us to look at this passage to try to understand why Jesus matters and others don't.

Why Jesus is special and the others are not. Why Jesus' word is of a different caliber and a different quality and a different status than the other ones.

So please turn with me to Matthew 11, verse 25. At that time, Jesus said, In case you didn't get it, the wise and the learned are the Pharisees.

They were wise in their own opinion. They were learned in their own opinion. Lord, Father, praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, this was your good pleasure. God hid certain truths from those who thought they were wise and learned.

[4:29] And why would God hide certain truths from them? There are all kinds of reasons. Some people are self-righteous. Some people are unteachable.

They remind me of my freshmen in college who think they know everything. And then I ask them to spell Heidegger and they find out that they don't know everything. Some people are opinionated and they are so convinced of the truth of their opinions that they don't see why the rest of us don't agree with them.

Some of us are bigots. Some of us are prejudiced. Some of us think we know it all. For those of you who are parents with little children, that phase will come.

You know, give it time. They know it all. But the Father has hidden these things from the wise and the learned and revealed it to little children.

In the next verse, he says, Yes, Father, this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father.

[5:41] Even Paul says, expresses his wish that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. Even Paul realizes he hasn't arrived. Now I see in part.

We know Jesus a little bit, but we certainly don't know everything about Jesus. And that's the glory of eternity, I suspect. So, no one knows the Son except the Father.

And now listen to this bold statement. And no one knows the Father except the Son. And the one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

No one knows the Father except the Son. If I stood up in front of you here and I said, I'm the only one in all of America who knows how to balance the budget.

I, I alone, I'm the only one in all of America. What should you think? Well, the naive, of course, would agree with me. But that's why you're naive.

[6:48] C.S. Lewis says, when somebody stands up and says, I'm the only one, you think, you should think one of three things.

You know, somebody slipped LSD in his coffee. You know, they're psychotic. He's having grand illusions. You know, send him to psychiatric ward.

He's lunatic. That's one option. The other option is that he's a liar. He's a liar through and through. So you could be a lunatic.

You could be a liar. Or the other possibility, you, Jesus is Lord. Is Jesus lunatic? Is Jesus liar?

Is Jesus Lord? Lord, you read the Gospels. And you ask the Holy Spirit to help you see which one of those three he is. But Jesus is making a really bold statement.

[7:53] I'm the only one who knows the Father. My goodness. So, not only does Jesus know the Father, but also, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Please notice the word reveal. It has appeared twice now. I thank you, Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to the little children.

No one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. This is a passage about revealing the truth. This is not a passage about soccer.

It's not a passage about how to cook pizza. It's a passage about revealing the truth. The truth is what is important at this point. Because the truth is so important, Jesus says something really, I mean, boy, he is bold in this passage.

Come to me, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. He doesn't say, come to Rabbi Gamaliel, or wait till Rabbi Akiba appears on the scene, or wait, or go to this teacher, or that teacher, or Nicodemus.

[9:28] Jesus says, come to me. Now, why does Jesus say, come to me, rather than go to somebody else? I am very good at some things, and I say that just as a matter of fact, not as a boast.

I happen to be good at some things, but in other things, I'm just awful. And I know myself. I don't have illusions.

When it comes to cars, I'm awful. In 67, I bought a VW Beetle, and foolishly opened the hood, and couldn't see the engine anywhere.

And somebody had to remind me that the engine is in the back, in a VW Beetle. How am I supposed to know that?

You know, you know, the light comes on, the tires. Well, I can't tell whether they're low or too much. [10:40] In certain things, I am not the right person. If you want to know something about your car, if you're having car problems, you don't come to me.

I'm telling you, I know nothing about cars. I'm the last person that you should go to, maybe not even then. But, if you want to understand how to fix cars, you go to a good car mechanic.

We've had a lot of electricity problems at home, and just as I don't know anything about cars, I don't know anything about electricity. But, there is a person here that, at church, a dear friend, and I said, you know a lot better than I do.

You know, you're a handyman. I'm not a handyman. You take a look at it. You know, if I fix it, it'll get worse. So, Jesus says, come to me. Not Nicodemus, not Gamaliel, not Akiba, not any of those. Come to me. Why should we go to Jesus? For the very simple reason that Jesus just told us, no one knows the Father except the Son.

[12:01] So, if the Son knows the Father, and you want to know something about the Father, you go to the right teacher. You don't go to the wrong teacher. If you want to study medicine, you don't go to a conservatory.

In a conservatory, you learn a lot about music. You won't learn a thing about medicine. You go to the right teacher. And who is the right teacher? Jesus. Why?

Because Jesus knows the Father. But sometimes, you go to the right place, and the person says, no, I don't want to tell you.

You know, I'm not interested. I don't have time for you. You know, just before the test, student asked me, what's the answer to this question?

And I say, why didn't you ask me four days ago? Or a week ago? I would have told you then. I'm not going to tell you two minutes before the test. Sometimes students ask me, you know, how many languages do you know?

[13:16] And I say, it's none of your business. I don't know if I should share this with you, but, you know, there's a dark side to me too.

I was teaching second year Hebrew, and I had really, really, really bright students. I mean, they were fantastic. They're probably the best students I had.

And they were getting, you know, proud of themselves and conceited, and I thought to myself, pride comes before the fall. I will bring about the fall. And they were just, you know, they were just brilliant, and they were good.

And I wanted to teach them a lesson in humility, that they really don't know everything. So on the test, even though it was a course in Hebrew, I gave them a passage in Aramaic to translate. Hebrew and Aramaic alphabet is the same. So I know how to tell the two languages apart. They don't. So I gave them a passage in Aramaic to translate.

[14:28] And halfway through the course, they came to me, the test, they came to me and said, Professor Masuh, this is much harder than anything we've done in class. And I snapped at them, next time, study more.

And for a week, I pretended that I was totally unhappy with them because they are dingbats. And then after a week, I told them that I pulled a trick on them that as a matter of fact, it was Aramaic, not Hebrew, so I didn't expect them to be able to translate anything. Well, they didn't think it was funny.

Arthur was hilarious. But you go to the teacher who knows what he's doing. And in the case of Jesus, Jesus doesn't say, I know the Father and I'm not telling anybody.

It's my secret. It's for me. You're left out. You're excluded. You know, you're outside the ark. What Jesus says, no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

[15:44] And if we come to Jesus and Jesus decides to reveal him, the Father to us, he will. Jesus knows the Father, can reveal him, and in some cases, will reveal him as he pleases.

As he pleases. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. And then, here comes the difficult passage. 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.

I want you to hear me carefully. What I'm going to say is probably new to most of you. You have probably never heard this before. And so, I want to make sure you understand what I'm saying. Jesus says, take my yoke upon you.

[16:49] I would have thought that the next thing he would say is, and rest in me, or find comfort in me, or find consolation in me. But he says, take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

Learn and yoke go together. The reason that is the case is that in rabbinic literature, yoke is a technical term.

It's not an ordinary term. It's a special term. If in a computer lab, the professor says, stop playing with the mouse, he doesn't mean Mickey Mouse, and he doesn't mean chasing a mouse on the floor.

When he says, don't play with the mouse, he means that thing that you use to maneuver the computer. So, in a computer lab, mouse is a technical term.

Yoke is a technical term in rabbinic literature. Yoke means knowledge, education, teaching.

[17:57] So, when Jesus says, take my yoke upon you, it's the same thing as saying, take my teaching upon you. Everybody in Israel knew that.

Certainly, all the rabbis knew that. As a matter of fact, in Israel, when a Gentile wanted to convert to Judaism, they would be put through a series of questions and lessons and initiation rites.

And if you pass them all, the last two questions you would ask the Gentile is, are you aware that Israel at the present is only a servant?

That Rome is the powerful city. at the present, not always, but just right now. If you want political power, you cast your lot with Rome. And so, if you join Israel for political power, you're joining the wrong country.

Rome is the world power. So, they would ask as the second to the last question, are you aware, do you understand that at the present, we are a defeated, conquered country, oppressed by Rome?

[19:16] And then, if the person said yes, then you ask the very last question. And the last question is, are you willing to accept the yoke of the Torah?

Are you willing to accept the teaching of the Torah? what Jesus is doing here is paraphrasing a passage from a famous book called Ecclesiasticus, not Ecclesiastes, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.

It's not that book, it's another book. It's a book on wisdom. And, and, because of that book, yoke means teaching.

And so, Jesus, take my yoke, teach my, take my teaching and learn. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for my, for your souls because my teaching, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Let me say something very important. I am not saying that we shouldn't come to Jesus for our problems. I am not saying that. I would never say that.

[20:33] I am as emphatic as ever that we should come to Jesus for all of our problems and I can give you a whole host of passages that deal with going to Jesus for your problems.

Casting your anxieties on him because he cares for you. Be anxious for nothing. 1 Peter 5, 7, Philippians 4, 6. But in this passage he is talking about the yoke of his teaching.

He is saying his teaching is lighter or easier than the teaching of the other teachers that you shouldn't go to because they don't know anything about God to begin with.

Well, we are only halfway through the sermon. I want you to look at chapter 12, the first eight verses. Chapter 12, the first eight verses is an illustration of what Jesus has just finished teaching. Jesus has made certain bold statements and now we see them in real life, in concrete shape, in form. So the first thing that Jesus said is that the Father has hidden these things from the learned and the wise.

[21:52] Look at how chapter 12 begins. At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain to eat them.

when the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, Lord, your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath. You know what they should have said?

Your disciples are doing what we think is unlawful on the Sabbath. Here we have the learned and the wise passing judgment on the meaning of the Sabbath and what is legal on the Sabbath and what is not.

And what does Jesus say? he has hidden. The Father has hidden it from the wise and the learned. And there are your wise and the learned who don't get it.

And Jesus has to straighten them out. In spite of all of their learning, they don't see it. And Jesus has to explain it to them.

[23:00] Okay. Jesus says, he knows the Father and he can reveal the Father. Let's look at this passage and as we read it, let's see what does Jesus reveal about the Father.

Aside from this debate, should we harvest or should we not harvest? Is picking up grains harvest or not? Let's see whether Jesus tells us anything about the Father.

Father. Starting with verse three. He answered, haven't you read what David did when his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.

Or haven't you read in the law that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the day by cleaning the temple which is working and yet are innocent?

I tell you, verse six, don't miss the point, verse six, I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

[24:20] One greater than the temple is here. Jesus is here. verse seven, if you had known what those words mean, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent, for the son of man is Lord over the Sabbath.

Look at that verse, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. That is a quotation from the Old Testament. It's from Hosea six, seven, in which God says, I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

The word for mercy is the word chesed, that wonderful Hebrew word. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Jesus says, if you only understood this verse, you wouldn't be doing all these foolish accusations.

Who is saying, I desire mercy? The father in Hosea is saying, I desire mercy. So Jesus is saying, let me reveal to you something about the father.

The father desires mercy, not sacrifice. But you don't think so. You think that the father is stuck on ceremony and details.

[25:40] Whether we can pick up grain or whether we can't pick up grain. But the real issue is mercy, not sacrifice. And furthermore, in addition to that, a couple more things.

Of course, it's the father who gave us the Sabbath. You only have to read the Ten Commandments to see that in Exodus 20. But who is the Lord of the Sabbath? Is the Sabbath above the son of man or is the son of man?

Who is the Lord of whom? The son of man is Lord over the Sabbath. He is trying to help us understand the father and the way the father ordered things and put things together.

The son of man is Lord over the Sabbath. He decides what is legal and what's not legal. He decides what's right and what's not right.

He decides what should be done or what should be done. Not the Pharisees with the wrong interpretations, but the son of man. And how does the son of man know that?

[26:44] Because he knows the father. That's how he knows that. And then Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. How are we seeing this in this passage?

Go to verse 1. At that time Jesus went through the grain field on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.

When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, look, your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath. If it were left up to the Pharisees to decide what should or should not happen, the Pharisees would have said, don't pick up grain.

And if the disciples don't pick up grain, what will happen to the disciples? They will go hungry. Jesus gives them permission to pick up grain.

Which is more merciful? which is an easier commandment to carry, to say to someone who is hungry, don't eat, or to say, eat.

[27:57] Here is food, it's okay. Which is more merciful? I don't know what you think you're going to do when you encounter Jesus. Maybe for some of you, for some teaching in your youth, think that he's the boogeyman, or some dreadful character, or you know, Jack the Ripper, or some slasher, and some, you know, Friday the 13th.

In relationship to his discipleship, Jesus was full of mercy. The father desires mercy, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and what is Jesus doing?

Allowing the merciful thing to do. Who on earth understands the father better? The Pharisees who say don't, or Jesus who says yes? So this passage is telling us that Jesus knows the father, he is willing to reveal him, and don't waste your time going to the long teachers.

father, there are thousands of teachers out there, thousands. I mean, we are in some ways protected.

You just go to Southern California, and it multiplies by ten times. You know, even words I can't pronounce, and I can't pronounce just about anything, but there are thousands of people with crazy ideas, and Jesus says, no one knows the father except the son.

[29:43] Don't waste your time going to the wrong place. Don't waste your time studying with the wrong teacher. Don't waste your time joining the wrong organization.

If you want to know who the father is, you come to Jesus. And on top of that, Jesus is not like taking comps for PhDs, where they try to kill you before you even finish the program.

Jesus' yoke is easy, and his burden is light. It is filled with mercy toward his people. That is what Jesus wants us to see about himself and about his word and the invitation to come to him.

Amen. Amen. fed'r