

PM Matthew 11:20-30 Come...and find rest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 February 2023

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 0 0] Word of God. Two readings. The first one is from Jeremiah. Just a few verses from Jeremiah chapter 6, verses 16 to 19.

Thus says the Lord, stand by the roads and look, and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.

But they said, we will not walk in it. I set watchmen over you, saying, pay attention to the sound of the trumpet.

But they said, we will not pay attention. Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them.

Hear, O earth, behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words.

[1 : 2 5] And as for my law, they have rejected it. We turn over now to Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew chapter 11, verses 20 through to 30. And I hope that you'll notice the connection with Jeremiah 6, but both in the general tone, and also in one specific wonderful promise.

So Matthew 11, verse 20 to 30. Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes.

But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

[2 : 5 4] You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Let's ask you to turn, please, to Matthew, chapter 11.

[4 : 3 7] For some while now, I've been preaching in the evenings on the great invitations of Scripture containing the word come.

There are lots of them, and we've looked so far at eight. Come and let us reason together in Isaiah 1.

Though your sins be as scarlet, yet they shall be as white as snow. Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters in Isaiah 55.

Come into the ark in Genesis 6. Come, for all is now ready. Luke 14. Come, see where he lay in Matthew 28.

Come and hear, and I will tell what the Lord has done for my soul. Psalm 66. Come to Peter and walk and water in Matthew 14.

[5 : 48] And last time, come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. Matthew 25.

Tonight, we have the most famous of them. Verses 28 to 30. Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and loathe in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

These words were spoken at a very stressful time for our Lord. When people were starting to reject him.

We've read in verse 20 how he began to denounce the cities of Galilee where most of his mighty works had been done because they did not repent.

[7 : 05] Warns them in no uncertain terms that they faced the judgment of God. Imagine that. These people had seen miracles and yet they still refused to believe.

He takes comfort in the sovereignty of God. In verse 25. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. He knows his own unique position and power.

Verse 27. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father. No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

and yet his heart still goes out to those unconverted multitudes struggling on in their sins.

[8 : 15] Hence these gentle words in our text. After all the denunciation of these cities he now gives this gentle invitation inviting a weary world to come to him and find rest.

So often when we're under stress we only think of ourselves don't we? Not Jesus. He is thinking of us.

He alone can reveal the Father to us and therefore he invites us to come to him in. I want to consider these wonderful words tonight under three headings.

Christ's compassion to the weary where rest is to be found in Christ and how rest is to be found by faith and by following.

first Christ's compassion to the weary come all you who labor and are heavy laden he cares about the weary all of them Christ's compassion shows through all the way through the gospels.

[9 : 58] Matthew 9 36 for example when he saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. David isn't with us tonight but I'm sure he's been looking after his sheep through the week.

If he were to see those sheep wandering about on the hills and perhaps being chased around by other farmers who weren't really interested in them David's heart would go out to them as a shepherd.

Likewise with Christ he sees his harassed and helpless people of Israel and he cares about them. again in Mark 6 having said to his disciples to come apart and rest a while when he sees the crowds he doesn't rest himself he had compassion on them and he taught them and he fed them all 5,000 of them.

In the upper room as well you see his compassion there he is knowing that his own death is only hours away and yet he's more concerned for the disciples than he is for himself.

Let not your heart be troubled. What about his heart? He's facing crucifixion but he says nothing of that. Let not your heart be troubled.

[11 : 37] He has compassion upon his disciples. even on the cross he has compassion on his mother telling John to look after her and indeed compassion upon the very people who are nailing him to the cross.

Father forgive them for they know not what they do. Hebrews 4 calls him a sympathetic high priest.

he is able to feel our weaknesses with us. Well here he shows compassion on the weary.

And that was actually prophesied in the Old Testament in Isaiah 50 and verse 4. The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.

weary. The AV has to speak a word in season to him who is weary. Well here in Matthew 11 is a word in season to those who are weary.

[12 : 53] Now who are these weary people that he has in mind? These people who labor and are heavy laden? Well the whole world is weary isn't it?

And they're weary over many things. They're weary with their work. They're weary with anxiety. They're weary with all the troubles of this world.

As a preacher I often look out over the congregation at the start of a service and my heart just breaks for them because they all look so tired.

they all look so worn out as if the world is on their shoulders. I remember when I used to work in London part of my journey involved going on the travelator as it was called at Bank Station and you stand on this travelator for about two or three minutes and you see all the people coming down on the other side and I used to look at their faces so weary so worn out so worried and you wondered what sort of troubles were weighing them down.

Well there might be many troubles that are weighing you down tonight different troubles for each one of you. We're not strangers are we to worry and weariness.

[14 : 30] now our text I'm sure has something to say to everyone who is weary whatever the reason. The words themselves after all are completely without limit all who labour and are heavy laden.

But I also have no doubt that our Lord has one particular kind of weariness especially in mind. The spiritual weariness of those who are weighed down by sin.

And especially those who are worn out with trying to be saved by their own good works. When he goes on to speak about his yoke he is drawing a deliberate contrast with the yoke of the law.

And especially the law as interpreted by the scribes and the Pharisees with all the extra rules that they added on top of it.

Peter speaks of that yoke in Acts 15 at the council of Jerusalem when it was suggested that the Gentile converts should be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.

[16 : 08] Peter objected. Why put a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

It was common in those days to talk of a rabbi's teaching as his yoke. And if you were following his teaching then you had taken his yoke.

Well the scribes and the Pharisees were all teaching keep the law every word of it and you will be saved. And then as if that were not enough they were adding their own interpretations and their own rules.

That was their yoke. And the people just couldn't do it. They were weighed down with their guilt.

They were carrying a burden that they could not bear. Well today the scribes and the Pharisees are no more. But their teaching lives on in a thousand forms.

[17 : 22] Every religion except Christianity rests upon works. Do this and you will be saved. And the way Christianity is taught in some churches is pharisaical resting upon works.

Do this. This is the way to eternal life. And the people were weary trying.

This was the condition of multitudes back in first century Israel. And it's still the condition of some today. Not everyone of course.

Some I'm sure even then couldn't care less about the law of Moses. Their motto was eat drink and be merry. And certainly today there are a lot of people around us who really don't care about the law.

Who don't care about sin or even acknowledge that sin exists. Our Lord has nothing to say to such people here in our text tonight.

[18 : 37] Though he does have a lot to say to them elsewhere. But to those who are burdened by sin he is full of compassion.

There's a vivid picture of this burden of sin in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. One of the greatest books ever written. If you haven't read it then please do so.

It tells of Christian leaving the city of destruction and heading for the celestial city. But he's carrying a heavy burden on his back.

And people ask him where he got it. And he says he got it by hearing the law. He struggles on with that burden for some time until at last he comes to the cross and there it's taken from him.

Which brings us to our second point where rest is to be found. Jesus says come to me and I will give you rest.

[19 : 59] Rest is to be found in Christ himself and only in Christ. The invitation notice is to come to him.

It's not come to church. Good though that is. The good church will indeed be a place where you'll find friendship and where you will hear about the Lord Jesus.

But until you come to the Lord Jesus personally you will not find rest. It may be that in some grand old cathedral or even in a small country place of worship where prayer has been offered for centuries you may feel a lovely sense of peace.

That's nice. But it won't last. no Jesus says come to me. He personally will give you rest.

Rest is only to be found in the Lord of the church. Going to church, reading the Bible, attending courses, reading books, even pilgrim's progress.

[21 : 21] they're only of use if they lead you to Christ. Throughout the Gospels, our Lord Jesus Christ points to himself as the answer to all our needs.

I am the bread of life, he says. I am the light of the world. I am the good shepherd. I am the door. I am the resurrection and the life.

I am the way, the truth and the life. I am the vine. Always pointing to himself as the answer. And he often speaks of coming to him to receive all these blessings.

John 6, for example, whoever comes to me shall not hunger. and whoever believes in me shall not thirst. He sees the sovereignty of God in that also.

All that the Father gives me will come to me. And yet his heart is open to all. Whoever comes to me, I will not cast out. His complaint against the Pharisees is that they will not come to him.

[22 : 44] John 5, 40, he refused to come to me that you may have life. The truth is that every spiritual blessing is in Christ and in him alone.

Thus Paul says in Ephesians 1, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

God is in him. In him, Paul says, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

In Christ we have everything. Without Christ we have nothing. Likewise here, rest is to be found in Christ alone.

Now why is that? Well, remember what he's just said. No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

[23 : 59] Augustine famously said, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you. Rest ultimately is found in God and Christ is the gateway to God.

Consider also what this rest is that he's speaking of. If it's only physical rest that you need, then there are things you can do about it.

Get yourself a comfier bed. Listen to some calming music. Go away on holiday and sit under a palm tree. Take sleeping pills if you need to.

Though prayer will help even here. Psalm 127 says, he gives his beloved sleep. If it's rest from anxiety that you need, again, there are things you can do.

you can talk over your problems with family and friends. If you're worried about your health, go along to the doctor. If you're worried about money, well, there are people who can help you with that as well.

[25 : 20] Though again, Christ can help in ways that other people can't. Psalm 55 says, cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you.

Paul says, be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

But if it's spiritual rest that you need, rest from sin, rest from guilt, rest from the fear of judgment, there is nothing that you or anyone else can do about that.

You can only find that rest in Christ because he's the only one who can deal with sin. That's why he came.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. even as he spoke these words, he knew what lay ahead of him. He knew what the price of this rest was.

[26 : 37] In order to obtain rest for his people, he himself must die on the cross for the sins of his people. He would lay down his life for us.

He would bear our sins in his own body on the tree. he would suffer the just for the unjust to bring us to God. He must die so that we might be forgiven.

That was the only way in which rest could be found. And that rest is a gift. I will give you rest, Jesus says.

There's nothing to pay because he has already paid the price. Hence Paul can say we are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Therefore we must come to Christ for rest. Only he can give us true spiritual rest. But how do we find that rest?

[27 : 50] Christ by faith and by faithfully following Christ. First by faith, that's what it means to come to Christ.

Remember in John 6, he who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall not thirst. Coming and believing are equivalent terms.

elsewhere in the Bible it speaks of looking to Christ and trusting in Christ. It all comes to the same thing. We rely upon him to give us what we need.

In this case the rest that comes through the forgiveness of sins. We must trust in him personally as our Lord and our Saviour, as the Son of God, as our Prophet, Priest and King, as the Crucified One, risen from the dead and alive forevermore.

As the One who alone can give us rest, we must present ourselves to him, seeking mercy from him alone.

[29 : 08] Imagine if you were in need and a wealthy friend had said, come round to my house and I'll give you all you need. you would present yourself at his house expectantly, trusting him to keep his promise.

And so it is here. We present ourselves before Christ. Lord, you have spoken, you have made this promise, you have promised rest, Lord grant it to me.

But he doesn't stop there with us coming to him in faith. He goes on to speak of us following him in verses 29 and 30.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

now at first sight there might appear to be a contradiction here. He's just said it's a gift, and now he appears to be laying down conditions.

[30 : 21] And having promised us rest, he's now talking about laying another yoke upon us. Are we just changing one yoke for another?

The key to it, it seems to me, is the nature of this yoke. And the key word is my. Take my yoke upon you.

Our Lord is looking here beyond our initial faith to the Christian life that follows. Faith in Christ necessarily involves following Christ because he is our Lord.

Coming is the first step towards following. Jesus himself links the two when he says to the rich young ruler, come, follow me.

Coming and following go together. If we want to know ongoing rest in the Christian life, then we must follow him.

[31 : 30] him. And that means taking his yoke. Remember I said that a rabbi's yoke was his teaching.

To take his yoke was to follow his teaching. To take Christ's yoke is to follow his teaching and to accept whatever burdens he lays upon you.

Now this is not something that will wear us down in the way that the law does. Remember what a yoke was.

It was a wooden frame laid across the shoulders of an animal to make burden bearing easier. the yoke of the Pharisees did nothing of the sort.

Their yoke actually made it heavier. But the yoke of Christ does what it's meant to do. The teaching of Christ is meant to help us.

[32 : 34] Our Lord speaks of his gentleness here. I am gentle and lowly in heart. Unlike the Pharisees who were proud and severe. That is our first lesson in the Christian life.

It was in lowliness of heart that Christ went to the cross. As Paul says he humbled himself to the death of the cross. And we must imitate him in that.

As Paul says let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. Much of our weariness comes through pride. Inhumility lies rest.

But also being humble his commands are gentle. My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Now how is that you might say? Some of Christ's commands seem very demanding don't they? Not even thinking an angry thought. not even entertaining a lustful thought.

[33 : 45] That seems hard. But Christ makes it easy. First by writing God's law on our hearts so that we can truly say I delight to do your will oh my God.

And then secondly by giving us his spirit to enable us to walk in his ways. we may not always do so but we want to do so.

And the power to do so has been given to us. Given to us notice. This is all a gift of God. Hence John can say 1 John 5 3 echoing our Lord's words here.

His commandments are not burdensome. Christ himself is echoing the Old Testament in all this. In Jeremiah 6 and verse 16 which we read earlier thus says the Lord stand by the roads and look and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is and walk in it and find rest for your souls.

that too was spoken at a time when people were turning away from God. When Jeremiah had the solemn duty to pronounce judgment upon them.

[35 : 09] But Jeremiah is urging them to turn back to the good way. Christ's way is the good way where we will find rest.

So let me ask you then as we close have you found that rest? Have you found rest first of all from your sins?

That's the most important question. As long as you're still carrying that burden of sin it will weigh you down.

No matter how much success you achieve in this world no matter how much pleasure you get out of this world you will always have a heavy heart.

There will always be a cloud hanging over you until you come to Christ for the forgiveness of sin. And let me add that even if you don't feel that burden at the moment it's still there and you will feel it on the day of judgment.

[36 : 22] You need to have it lifted from you now. I mentioned earlier Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Christian carried his burden for quite a long time.

Even after he'd begun to seek for the celestial city, even after he'd become religious still that burden was on his back. And there are many people in the churches who are outwardly religious, who would say that they're seeking after heaven, that they believe in God, and yet the burden is still there.

How they need to come to the cross, to have that burden taken away. When Christian, in Pilgrim's Progress, finally saw that burden roll off his back and go down into a grave.

He was full of joy. He sang blessed cross, blessed sepulcher, blessed rather be, the man that there was put to shame for me.

Is that your song? Secondly, are you finding rest in the Christian life? love? The secret is once again Christ himself taking his yoke and his yoke only.

[37 : 52] There are many Christians who still try to keep the law in their own strength, and they're exhausted by it. That was the problem in Galatia.

Paul asks there, having begun in the spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh? There are others who make up their own rules, creating a new yoke for themselves, even worse than the law.

No wonder they're weary. Follow Christ, rely on his strength, and you will find rest. And once you have found that rest, you will have rest forever.

in heaven, that rest will be perfected. You will have complete rest, eternal rest.

As John says in Revelation 14 and verse 13, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors.

[39 : 10] The Psalms, as always, contain great wisdom on this. Psalm 37 says in successive verses, trust in the Lord, delight yourself in the Lord, commit your way to the Lord, be still before the Lord.

The AV actually has rest in the Lord. It's always the Lord. Come to me, our Lord says, and I will give you rest.

May we all find rest in him. Amen. Amen.