

Come Unto Me All You Who Labour

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now together to Matthew's Gospel and to chapter 11, Matthew's Gospel chapter 11 and we may just read at verse 27.

All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal him. 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 lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Particularly the words of verse 28, well known they are to us and precious.

Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Sometimes, this is a wee aside before we get into it, but sometimes in talking with some of the ministers in the church, particularly from the Western Isles, and this is not a reflection on them at all, it's simply information.

[1 : 44] But it's interesting in this context, because sometimes they are very reluctant to give out beforehand details of their sermon, because they never know quite what they are going to be preaching on this morning or this evening, whatever.

And that goes for almost all the ministers I know in that particular part of the world. Sometimes they will not even give the psalms out, because they don't know what they are going to be preaching. Well, I thought I knew, and I had an early morning change. And this was very much on my heart, so I trust that it will be of benefit to us all.

Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If you think about it, by this stage in Jesus' ministry, he clearly understood his relation to his Father.

Although he was man of very man, he was clear that he was also God of very God. We read there just briefly in verse 27, All things have been delivered to me by my Father.

[3 : 12] And when he refers to himself as the Son of his Father, the reference is to him being the eternal Son of God, who became man.

So he was very much aware of his identity. I remember years ago, in evangelism, actually in the Jewish community it was, and I remember years ago arguing that Jesus would need to have been soft in the head, and those of you who know the Glaswegian for that will know it, that's how I expressed it, or crazy, to make such a claim about himself as he does here.

He was either crazy or true. And then, a while after that, a year or two after that, I was reading in C.S. Lewis, some of you will know, was a professor of philosophy, among other things, and was a superb apologist for the Christian position.

And I discovered that he said something very similar, and I felt very thankful that I was in good company on that. He said he was either a madman or the divine redeemer.

Come to me, he says, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And not only does he give us this awesome invitation, but we can say there is no greater invitation was ever given to the sinful sons of man, of Adam.

[4 : 57] And Jesus spoke these words to people right where they heard. He spoke to them in their need. He identified their need, and he spoke to their need.

I was thinking about this in relation to ourselves, and I'm not saying you're a moaner like me, but I'm saying that we sometimes moan and groan about what we have and what we don't have, in terms of what is provided by the state.

We don't have all the access to all the facilities we would like. That's true. But when you compare yourself with people in the past, and when you compare yourself with people in the day of Jesus, in his public ministry, you ought to be stum, you ought to be totally quiet.

We're in a different world. For all the moral mess, we have so many provisions and benefits here in this land. These folks had no public holidays.

They had the festivals of Israel, but they had no regular holidays and public holidays. They had no support, official support, from the state.

[6 : 24] All they did have was the burden of taxes to the Romans, taxes to the civil authorities, taxes to the temple tax, and the tithes on top.

Life was burdensome to them. They lived with oppression and fear. They were under the rule of Rome. And although Rome allowed some flexibility, Rome ruled okay.

There was a point at which there was no arguing. And so for these folks, they lived in a situation where they were oppressed and afraid.

They were careworn and workworn, and life itself was at times a burden. A burden that for many of them perhaps seemed too heavy to bear.

And then there was a future. The uncertainty. And you see, Jesus addressed them in their need.

[7 : 31] Come to me with all your burdens, and all your cares. Come to me with all that weighs you down, and I will give you rest.

Yes, there's uncertainty. There's uncertainty for us in the 21st century at this point in time. Who would have thought that BP shares would have plummeted the way they have?

And no, I don't have any shares in BP. Almost two years ago, there was a huge crash, as you may recall, in the financial markets in the world.

And people had been hugely wealthy, became only moderately wealthy or poor. People lost billions. If they had them to lose, and they did, they lost.

Life suddenly, that seemed so rosy, became gloomy and dark and burdensome. The future, by reason of the fact we don't know it, can be fearful in prospect.

[8 : 39] And then there was the whole concept, and they were used to believing in judgment, in heaven, in hell, in the reality of the eternal word, in the great day of judgment to come.

Life, as regards the future too, was uncertain, unpredictable, and yet there was that sense of the reality of one thing we do know.

There's the judgment seat of God. And so there were many things that made them weak and heavy laden, burdened and toiling. And Jesus addresses them where they're at.

He speaks into their situation. whatever it was that troubled them, Jesus had the same wonderful invitation, come to me and I will give you rest.

And so I want us to think about this just in three points, three obvious points in the text. And I want us to begin by looking at the fact that the invitation is grounded on authority.

[9 : 53] Jesus says, come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. And we read verse 27 because it puts this in the context of the authority he has.

See what he says, all things have been delivered to me by my Father. All things have been delivered to me by my Father.

He has the authority to invite us, to command us, to call us, to come to him. He is able to fulfill his word because he's been given the right by his Father, the power to do.

All things have been delivered to me, he says. I have the power to do. I will give you what I invite you to rest.

And this is important in our understanding of him and his own self-awareness. He had the, I can say it reverently, the God-given right.

[11 : 01] It was given to him of his Father to do this. And you may recall that it was the same authority that manifested itself later on at the climax of his earthly ministry.

Remember, he took the disciples or told them to go up to Galilee. He would meet them there after the resurrection. And there on the hillside he instructed them and he commissioned them.

All authority he said, in heaven and earth is given unto me, therefore go, make disciples. Jesus was aware of this even before the resurrection.

And then afterwards he could reiterate this. you find it in Matthew 28, 12. And before he came back down to Jerusalem and to the Mount of Olives to leave them, he had commissioned them as one whose authority is that of God himself.

And so was an abridged deity shining in his heart and he was aware of it. He says, come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden.

[12:13] I don't know what it's like in your own English version but in my English version here the words of Jesus are in red ink and the personal pronoun me is given a capital letter come to me he says because all authority is mine all things have been delivered to me by my Father.

I have the capacity to give true rest and I'm giving it in the Father's name. Peace of mind freedom from that anxiety that paralyzes the mind I will give it.

And he says that and he knows that he knows he can do it. It's his Father's delight that he reveals not only the invisible Father but he reveals the way of rest in himself.

And if you go back a wee bit in this passage we didn't read it but if you look at verse 21 through to 24 you will see that he highlights the terrible mistake of the inhabitants of Galilee of Bethsaida and Chorazin and Capernaum that they heard him and they rejected him.

They heard his claims and they heard his invitation and they rejected him. They hardened their hearts. And oh what guilt must needs attach to those who when they hear Jesus bidding them to come to him put that away stifle it and they impoverish themselves and they turn away from true rest.

[14:14] And whilst we look at the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum we must look at ourselves. We must recognize that hearing a wonderful passage like this that's so familiar to us how have we responded to it?

How have we responded? Those of you who have defined yourselves simply by not becoming members in the church those of you who define yourselves as adherents why have you not responded to this invitation?

One of the services some years ago before we came in among you we used to come to your communion Sunday evening you probably don't remember that but we do we used to come among you because some of your folks supported Gavin Hill and we were in Gavin Hill and I remember Principal Macleod preaching on this very text on the Sabbath evening of one of these communions a great preacher of the word but how many came forward as a result of the preaching of that word how many received Christ's words come to me and I will give you rest and our business is to recognize the need to respond in a positive way and not to stifle the word we hear let's not be like the inhabitants of Capernaum and Bethsaida and

Chorosan come to me he says with all the authority of heaven and I will give you rest the invitation grounded then on authority the invitation secondly is to come as we are come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden he's telling us to come as we are weak and heavy laden all who toil and who are burdened is another translation all who are convinced that they need to come to him and you see listen to what I just said there because to my mind that's the key the key reason why you haven't come to him is you don't see the need to come to him ultimately that's what you're liable for because if you really see the need to come to him if you're convinced that the rest you need for your soul is in him then you come to him you come to him believing his word of grace to you you simply take him at his word and come to him with all your burdens you come to him as the one who says come as you are burdened toiling struggling with the storms of life you come to him for the true rest not only that he gives but that he himself is necessarily come to me and you will find rest for your souls that's an interesting way he put it because what he's saying is you'll find rest in me for your soul it's not only simply although it is this that

I will give you rest it's more than that you'll find rest for your souls in me I am it as well as I provide it and this is important to us to recognize that we need him to resolve this sense of burden wherever that sense of burden is within our own heart whatever it is that we feel desperate about at times and I hope we feel desperate about our own relationship with God that it's not what it should be that it maybe even hasn't begun and Jesus says come to me and I'll resolve that I'll give you rest that takes us back to our natural state as sinners we don't naturally want to face up to the problem that our sin separates our sin causes disharmony between ourselves and the

[19:02] Lord and Jesus can resolve that it is through him and his finished work we have peace with God the trouble is you see that so many then as now they labor and are worn out and weary with all their cares and yet they're still trying to go on in their own strength and to resolve things for themselves to give themselves a sense of well being and of rest but the way forward says Jesus is find your rest in me so many people are caught up with the here and now things that they don't spare a thought for the deeper things for the rest that Jesus is and gives many work work work and play a little if they will but they don't take seriously the reality of eternity and of the need to be right with

God to have rest into our soul Jesus says come to me I will give you rest and verse 29 and you will find rest for your souls we are confronted nowadays with all sorts of problems in our society and family life among our young people and not so young people people who are enmeshed in ways that are not right and addictions that are destructive all attempts really to resolve that restlessness within the human heart and all doomed to failure concealing or attempting to conceal the real problem that there is no rest apart from the Lord

Jesus Christ and therefore it is serious to refuse the help of Jesus come to me he says all you who are laboring and are heavy laden and I will give you rest in a sense you see nothing matters more than that we have rest of mind a sense of well being between ourselves and God other relationships can be difficult and need resolving but this is the great relationship that must be resolved if we are to have rest and to our souls and the Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke sternly at times they thought it was all about about working it out for yourself about attaining to a special standing in the community and in the religious community by striving in your own strength by doing the thing that is called law keeping

Paul said I thought that righteousness came by the law but when he heard Jesus as never before on the Damascus road he began to see the error of his ways and now discovered the need of rest and to his soul so many are like like the accountant they taught up one side they taught up the other and they seek to balance the books we can't do that with God can't be done sure I told you about the Jewish lawyer who was just like that remember he was sitting at his desk and he took his great book he had in front of him lifted it and slammed it down and that's what he said this is the way I see it here are my good deeds here are my bad deeds and I trust that the good will cancel the bad can't be done and if we think like that we can thank

God that we've discovered it's not right it won't do and therefore Jesus speaks tenderly to our heart our best won't do we haven't begun to see our need of Jesus or shall I say more kindly we've just begun to see our need of Jesus when we discover our best will not do we need to look to him for rest and to our soul that's why we have these great invitations in the Old Testament oh everyone that thirsts come to the waters and him that has no money come buy milk and wine without money and without price why do you labor for that which is not truly satisfying no come to me says [24 : 37] Jesus come just as you are with all your burdens and cares we were thinking on Thursday evening about something I'd used actually in Westland Court in a shortened version Skelhill were you there and we based it around Zechariah 12 10 they shall look on him whom they pierced actually John 19 37 as well it's a cross reference they shall look upon him whom they pierced and mourn and someone has said a true saving sight of Christ makes us mourn for the sin our own sin that nailed him to the tree that necessitated his death in the room instead of sinners a true sight a saving sight makes us mourn over him whom we pierced and therefore you see seeing him in this way as the great burden bearer as the one who bears in his own body to the tree of sins we listen to him saying come to me and

I will give you rest the sweet little children's chorus says burdens are lifted at Calvary Jesus is very near and you know just before that it says days are filled with sorrow and care hearts are lonely and drear burdens are lifted at Calvary at Calvary at Calvary come to me and what we've got to do is be honest with him as with ourselves just tell him yes I am filled with cares and burdens and anxieties and the greatest burden of all the burden of our sin and guilt burdens are lifted at Calvary and he calls us to him in that way that we might simply receive him in what he is

I will give you rest you will find rest and to your souls and that brings us lastly to the fact that the invitation carries a sure promise I will give you rest sometimes it's good to think about the meaning of a word by thinking about the opposite and to my mind thinking about rest and to our soul is better thought about in terms of the opposite the opposite of rest is agitation anxiety restlessness and particularly with a sense of judgment to come of not being right you must know the feeling surely of trying to suppress that restlessness that anxiety but

Jesus has a better way he says come to me come to me as you are and I'll give you the rest you need and secretly long for and the fact of the matter is whatever way our own restlessness and our anxiety manifests itself we are to see Jesus as the one who resolves it and who gives rest and if as I hope we have some sense of our alienation or separation from God apart from Christ we will see all the more our need of coming to him for rest my dear friends my dear Christian friends those of you who have formally professed him when we slide back from him as sometimes we do when we wander away for one reason or another maybe others don't know a thing about it but we know what

God knows it the way back is not to resolve things and then go back to him it's to go just as we are he wants us to come the way we are with the burden of our sin with the fact that we are laboring under our own corrupt heart the wretchedness that Paul talks about oh wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death with this with repeat shortcoming with repeat sin the answer is come to me says Jesus and I certainly will give you rest and you know there's no peace there's no tranquility there's no freedom from agitation without coming to him simply knowing that his invitation to rest in him carries this assurance I will give you rest I'll put right what's wrong [30 : 25] I'll put right what's gone wrong he bids us and he attaches to it like a like a an email attachment he attaches to it this sure promise I will give you rest I'll refresh you right now right where you are and you see submitting to him right where we are and the way we are coming to him with our burdens he says learn from me by taking my yoke upon you in other words submitting to me and submitting to my ways that's the difficult part we know that coming to Jesus for rest involves submitting to his way I may have said it to you before but I remember the late Callum Matheson telling me about his spiritual pilgrimage and not that he took any pride in saying what

I'm about to say but he was just talking about the perverseness of his heart as a sinner he knew the gospel he knew the doctrines of the gospel he'd been brought up in the Isle of Lewis he had considerable knowledge as a boy he knew the business and I remember him saying he went after having lapsed in church attendance he went along to the church in London and I think it was Murda MacLeod it was the minister then and he said he described his experience under the word as a close shave and what he meant was he almost committed himself but he didn't at that time and he was saying I had a close shave not in any arrogant way but with shame that that's the way he thought and you see if we're like that we're not to presume upon

God that there'll be another day in the bottom there of the intimations today it says today if you will hear his voice don't presume upon God for tomorrow today if you will hear his voice don't harden your heart submit yourself to me says Jesus this is true rest learn from me the way of Jesus the life of Jesus is a challenge to the very best Christian and the most devoted Christian the life of Jesus the quality the consistency I hear you saying to me that he was the sinless son of God but he learned human experience don't forget that he learned human experience he he he he hadn't experienced himself at 16 he hadn't experienced 20 or 22 or 23 or 24 or 25 he had to learn that as he came into it and and we

I'm talking about that study him and see how he lived and learn from him why am I saying learn from him because he says that to you today listen learn from me for I am gentle gentle is the opposite of what people crave today they want to be powerful and in control lowly in heart no meekness is weakness they say Jesus says learn from me meekness is not weakness how is it that the eternal son of God who became man was humble eh when most folk crave to be great and powerful and arrogant how is it that the sinless son of

God who became man tells his disciples be like me be humble of heart tell us he does teach us he does learn from him rethink what it is to be his father learn to think about what it is to deny ourselves no one denied himself more than the son of God Paul argues that when he wants Christians to open their pockets or their bank accounts to give to the cause you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who being rich impoverished himself that you through his self impoverishment might be made rich learn from me he says for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your soul oh yes there will be many burdens and distresses in this life of course there will and that's why

[36 : 12] Christian songwriters have used the storms of life they've used the imagery of the sea and people like little boats on the sea and if you know anything about the sea you'll know that for the wee wily it's calm it's a long wily rough and sometimes very stormy and life under the sun is just like that we talk about the storms of life we're using imagery figures and in all the storms of life we are bidden by Jesus to come to him for rest and we are assured that he will give it may we find him to be our rest Amen