

" . . . and now, the rest of Jesus"

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[0 : 00] So we are in Matthew 11. We're taking a break from Matthew for Advent next week for a month or so, and then we'll come back to Matthew in the new year. But Matthew 11.

A little section here, what do we got, like nine verses, ten verses here, contains some of the sweetest words of Christ. The sweetest words of Christ, but also some of the harshest.

So let's start with the harshest. All the woe to you lions. What's going on there? You remember from last week, immediately before this stuff, Jesus had talked about the kind of criticisms that the crowd had levelled against him and John.

So the crowd had said things like, John, we're not into John. He's probably demon possessed. And Jesus, you're a drunk. We don't want to listen to you, they said. They were a tough crowd. Literally, they're a pretty tough crowd.

And now Jesus sort of expands his criticism, and he talks about the whole town. So not just the crowd that's with him. He talks about the whole town, and he calls them out, and he warns them. So he calls out Chorazan and Bethsaida and Capernaum.

[1 : 05] And this is a little tight group of towns. This was the home base of Jesus. Jesus had been performing the most amazing miracles there in these very religious places. These towns had front row seats to Jesus' teaching and miraculous signs.

Front row seats. And yet, on the whole, they didn't what? What was the thing that Jesus wanted them to do that they did not do?

Is they didn't repent. They didn't repent. I mean, people gathered. Jesus pulled a crowd.

They were keen to watch what happened, what was going on. But Jesus wasn't looking for admiration, and he wasn't looking for amazement.

He was looking for repentance, as verse 20 and 21 are about. And so he denounces them because of this. And then he steps it up. He compares them to Tyre and Sidon and Sodom, these notorious pagan cities.

[2 : 12] And he says, look, folks, if I'd have done what I did here in those places, I would have killed it. They would have turned around. We would have cleaned up.

It would have been amazing. They would have loved it. They would have repented. It would have been great. But you people, with all your religion and your pride, you're happy to be merely impressed.

You're happy to be merely sort of amazed and intrigued by what's going on here. You're not moved to repentance, though. It was literally this damning indictment on them.

But calling them out, it wasn't like Jesus was trying to... Because it's like, when you read it, it's quite full on what he says to them. And he's not just trying to get something off his chest.

It's not like a cathartic release. He's not like just enraged and has just to tell them this stuff.

Sometimes I get really angry with my kids, and I'll say something awful to them like, come on, guys. What is wrong with you?

[3 : 17] Which, just so you know, on a scale of one to good parenting, that's towards the lower end. And I don't expect my kids to go, oh, you know, well, Dad, I've got problems with impulse control and stuff.

I'm just like... I'm just yelling at them because I'm angry, and I'm yelling at them just to get something off my chest. Like, it's bad. It's not good. Jesus, in our passage, he actually wants them to respond well.

It's not a cathartic thing for them. We know this because that little phrase, woe to you, which sounds very serious to us, it's very dramatic, isn't it? But it's not a call for vengeance. That little phrase, it's a mixture of anger.

Yes, anger, but it's a mixture of lament and grief and pity for these people. Then, verse 25 happens, and it's a surprise to us, I think.

Like, Jesus, you know, he could have been really discouraged and prayed, God, Father, do you see the people I'm trying to work with here?

[4 : 19] I can't catch a break. But he doesn't say that. Listen to what he prays. It's interesting, we're kind of like eavesdropping on Jesus, praying this short little prayer to his Father.

He says, I thank you, Father. So he's just called out these people. And now he says, 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.

What do we learn from that? Well, we learn why the cities are not responding as they should. Why are they not responding? What do we learn?

Well, just in a short sentence, God hides himself from the wise and reveals himself to children. So what does that mean? It means God is hidden from people who think, you know, Jesus has nothing to teach them.

They're perpetually self-sufficient. Those who think they have all the answers to all the questions of life. God is hidden from them. But those who are open and humble and they're symbolized by children, those who are open and humble, God reveals himself to them.

[5 : 34] Now, it's nothing to do with age and it's nothing to do with intelligence. It's about a spiritual posture. It's about the posture of humility. And these towns did not have it.

Just remember where we are. Bit of a summary here. Woe to you towns that have just been doing amazing things in that should have known better.

Woe to you, Jesus says. Then he says, thank you, God, that this is panning out how you expected it to pan out. Why?

Because you are hidden from people who are proud and you are revealed to people who are humble. Okay, that's it so far. Now, what is revealed to people who are humble?

And what are the people who are proud missing out on? And that's where we get to verse 27 there. That's the content. That's the content of the revelation. How does God reveal himself?

[6 : 32] And what does he reveal? Here we go. Verse 27. 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 whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

What does that mean? Jesus knew God the way a son knows a father. Not through books and stories, but through presence. Jesus has been eternally present with the Father in this perfect, beautiful relationship.

So who's the best person to reveal God to the world? And how is that going to happen? The Father's Son. So if we ask the question, what does God reveal to the humble?

What's the content? It's Jesus. Jesus is God with a face. If you want to know God, you come to know him through the Son.

People have called this the scandal of particularity. There is one way to God. It's through Jesus. There is no salvation by sincerely believing something other than this.

[7 : 46] There is one way, and it's Jesus. Okay, so where have we got to now? Jesus has called out the cities that have rejected him. He's given us an insight into how God reveals himself through him and to the humble.

But what we've got so far is these very serious, but sort of propositions. They're like statements. They're kind of, Jesus has just said a whole lot of facts, which are very helpful to us.

But they're facts, you know, statements. Blip, blip, blip, blip, blip, blip. But he finishes his little sermon here with moving from facts to invitation.

And so now we go from the harsh to the sweet. The first is verse 28. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

As I said, I think some of the sweetest words in the New Testament. This is the first invitation of two invitations. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[9 : 01] I, no, let me say it like this. We are burdened by so much. We are burdened by so much.

I often feel like a failure as a father. I feel like a failure as a pastor often. I look in the mirror and I think, gee, you're looking haggard.

You're looking old. My baseline is mild to moderate anxiety. I have a chronic illness called Crohn's disease, and if you know something about mythology, it's honestly, it feels like the sword of

Democles.

It's just hovering above my head, and it could drop at any moment. I'm tired all the time. These things weigh so heavy on me.

And you will have different burdens, and there will be less or more, but you'll have different burdens. Maybe your burdens are loneliness. Maybe are temptations.

[10:06] Maybe you lack a real sense of purpose in your life. You don't know what your life is about. Maybe you're weighed down by just this enormous sense of responsibilities. Or maybe your burden is you have no responsibilities, and you feel your life is a bit useless.

Our burdens are cumulative. They are complex. They are multi-layered. Now, how does Jesus respond to our burdens?

Come to me, and I promise I will help you. So into our burdensome life comes the most powerful and complex solution to relieve our heaviness.

And no, Jesus doesn't offer us the fourfold paths as you would have in Buddhism, or the five pillars to peace you'd have in Islam. What does he do? He offers what other religions don't do.

He offers himself. He offers himself as the universal solution to everything that burdens us. And you might be thinking, Jesus is a bit light on details.

[11:17] And you're right. You notice what it doesn't say? It doesn't say how he will relieve these burdens. It doesn't say when he will relieve these burdens. Because the process, the process is not what we rest on.

It's why we don't get a fourfold path or five pillars. The process is not what we rest on. We rest on Jesus. Jesus. Jesus wants our souls resting on the surety that he keeps his promises.

And he has promised that he will help us in the best way, at the best time. And we don't know when that is. And we don't even know if it's this side of heaven.

Now verse 29 adds another layer for us. And it starts with such a shock. Because you're sort of like, oh, this is so great. This is so great. This is really great. And then the second invitation.

Take my yoke. Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me. I'm gentle and lowly in heart. And you'll find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy. My burden is light.

[12:21] So a yoke is one of those pieces of wood that used to sit on the back of like, you know, two oxen. I guess it still does. They still use them, right? The yoke is on the back of the neck of the two oxen that holds them together as they plough. So Jesus' second invitation.

The first has come to me. The second is, take my yoke. You might think, no. I don't need a yoke. Let me tell you my problems. I don't need a yoke.

I need a vacation. I need a, I need a silly, postrepedic, mesteros or something. I need a good night's sleep. In the wisdom of God, deep spiritual rest is not found in a life of leisure.

That's what Jesus is saying here. Deep spiritual rest is not taking life easy. The cure for a heavy burden is not no burden.

It's the right burden. In other words, it's not about doing nothing. It's about doing the right things. So Jesus here, as he's talking about a life of discipleship. So the yoke is to enter the school of Christ, to become his disciples, to bring, you know, to do our best to bring our lives under his control.

[13:34] See, we want the rest without the discipleship, but it doesn't work. You just described a holiday, you know, and it's nice.

The holidays are nice. Go on holidays. But they don't relieve your deepest burdens. When we talk about the kingdom, when we talk about the kingdom, right, kingdom is this amazing thing.

Actually, Vancouver wants the kingdom of God. Actually, forget about the God part. It wants the kingdom, wants the kingdom values. People love the idea of the kingdom, all the cool stuff.

It's the unconditional love. We want the kingdom, but we don't want the king. And it just doesn't work like that. Rest comes from walking with Jesus in discipleship.

See, that come to me word in the Greek, it's not like a one-off. You don't come to Jesus and that's it. It means come and follow. The grammar of it is this ongoing coming to Jesus, coming to Jesus, coming to Jesus. That's where the rest is.

[14:37] You're ongoingly bringing your life to Jesus. You want rest from striving to be somebody. Live in such a funny age of internet fame and we want to be somebody, we want our lives to matter.

You come to Jesus and you will know that you can rest knowing that you are deeply loved because you're a son of God, you're a daughter of God.

You can rest in that. You can bank that one, right? That's awesome. We want rest from sin's guilt. You have no solution to your guilt, but Jesus does.

A perfect solution. You want rest from thinking that your life is all up to you. I've got to make my life happen. I've got to get this thing under control.

I've got to do A, then B, then C. It's all up to me. I don't want to screw this up. I don't want to mess this up. We serve a king on a throne whose eye is on you constantly.

[15 : 48] You can rest in that. Rest from trying to measure up to, you know, whatever standards.

We want rest from that. You can rest in the knowledge that you are absolutely and utterly accepted by God. This is Christ's invitation to us.

Come. Come to me. Take my yoke. The one you have, the yoke you currently have, it's killing you. Take my yoke. It's better than the one you've got. It's light. It's easy. It's good. And there's life there. Amen.