

Matthew 11:25-30 “Finding Our True Rest”

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Good morning. If you'd like to turn in your pew Bibles to page 816, we'll be reading from Matthew chapter 11 today. As we've been thinking about this week, you know, we've got kind of this gap in where we're not continuing the John series.
- And we're transitioning to the Advent series that we'll be going through in the month of December. And so this morning we're going to be doing a one-off. But as I've wrestled with this passage, in many ways personally, over the past few weeks and months, looking for personally some rest and peace in Jesus.
- I can imagine that some of us came out of, though some of us had great Thanksgivings. Amazing, family-filled, tension-free, zero politics talked.
- No one bringing up past wounds, hurts, injuries. Turkey was perfect. No one complained about not having certain foods there.
- [1 : 2 1] I'm sure there are some of those out there. I hope they are. And I'm sure there are also some folks who dragged little kids into what are partially antique stores with zero childproofing and the tension and stress that you felt as you tiptoed around looking for outlets with no covers on them.
- And I'm sure some of you in this room feel that. I'm sure some of you also don't have people with you that you can only remember holidays with certain family members, and they're no longer here.
- I know that there are those things that have happened. I'm experiencing them, and I have experienced them. This is part of my life as well. I don't get up here preaching in a vacuum where my life is perfect.
- But I've reflected on some of the things that I've wrestled with over the past few weeks and months, and as I thought about what Thanksgiving can sometimes mean, though excellent and beautiful, and we give thanks to God for all His many blessings to us.
- And I think about the future with Christmas and some of the holiday tension that will just be Thanksgiving 2.0 for some of us. There's hard things that we deal with in the midst of this.
- [2 : 4 3] It's not just wonderful meals. It's not just perfect decorations. But there's real tension that comes. And so this morning, I want us to think about and reflect on Jesus and His provision of rest.
- Jesus and His yoke, which is lighter than any burden we could seek to bear. And so if you would, let's read from Matthew chapter 11.
- We're just going to read a few verses so that we can hopefully hear what the Lord might do in our hearts to make us more like Him, to transform us, to make us like His people more and more every day.

So let's read. This is from Matthew chapter 11, verses 25 through 30. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the 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.

[4 : 03] 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 pray. Father, would you reveal through these words your truth? Help us to get out of the way.

Help me to get out of the way. May we see a clear picture of the gospel, of the goodness of Jesus. May we be encouraged to continue to place all of ourselves, all of our trust, all of our faith in you and you alone.

Lord, we thank you for Jesus and what he offers us. Not something we could ever achieve. But something only he can give us, which he does freely by your grace.

We thank you and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So if you, obviously we're not in a series, right? So I want to just give you a brief overview of chapter 11 and what's happening there.

[5 : 18] Jesus is in the midst of his ministry. He's having a conversation early in chapter 11 about John, with John the Baptist followers and what's going on with who he is and who, what's his identity and how he belongs in this kingdom plan of what God's doing.

And John's disciples come to him and they're asking all these questions about who is he? And then it kind of goes to a place where in chapter 11 it talks about kind of a harsh condemnation.

A place where Jesus says, woe to these cities, these places he's gone and he's done ministry and he's shown forth who he is and revealed to them.

And what happens is no repentance. Right? And he's not condemning them because he, he just is willy nilly doing it because he himself has not seen the repentance of the kingdom.

Right? And so we switch from that to kind of addressing this reality. And it's wonderful that Will and we had the opportunity to still sing Jesus Loves Me.

[6 : 30] And just the reminder to become like children, because obviously in this passage, Jesus is reminding us of who we are and how our heart and our, our lives must, must be transformed into in order that we might know him.

Right? It 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. He's not just saying that only the kids are in on the secret. They get it.

He's saying that those of us who humble ourselves, those who understand that we must become like children to our great God and father. Then we understand the grace and goodness of the gospel, the salvation that lies in Jesus, the good news of repentance and faith so that we might have life eternally.

And so he's, he's going to this, this idea of, of addressing us becoming like children, the people of God becoming like children. And then he goes into this thing that's very similar to Jesus being the way, the truth and the life.

Right? He says that Jesus essentially is the, Jesus says that he's only the only way to the father. He says, he says, yes, father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my father.

[7 : 43] 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. Jesus is revealing the father in his presence. He is God incarnate on earth, which we'll celebrate.

Emmanuel, right? God with us, God in the flesh in the next few weeks. That God will be willing to leave his place in Jesus, his son, and take on human flesh and become one of us.

Jesus, the one who reveals to us, the father, Jesus, the one who reveals to us, God, because he's been sent on God's mission to do so.

And what he offers us, he offers us something incredible. And it's simple.

It's an invitation. But the beauty of this invitation is not that Jesus is the great inviter of God, that God sent him as a herald to just invite us into this cool little party.

[8 : 46] But Jesus is the son of God who has invited us into life. He invites all of us in, all of us who are coming off of hard seasons, labor, struggle, sin, pain.

He invites you in. What would happen to be the way we could accept this invitation? Why would this invitation be so important?

Why would make it so good? Well, let's just take a moment. That's why we talked about Jesus and the father. It's because Jesus is the only one who can invite you into God and his kingdom.

He's the one who's been sent on God's mission. He's the one to whom all these things have been revealed. He's the one who knows the father.

It's not, we don't. There's no other, you know, there's no other invitation from others that could be even close to equivalent. Because Jesus's resume, Jesus's lineage, Jesus's heritage is one that is other than any other person that's ever been born.

[10 : 03] There hasn't been another person who could extend you an invitation to peace and rest that would ever be able to be equal to what Jesus is offering here.

Because every other person is just a normal guy, a normal girl. Jesus has been with the father. He has been sent by the father.

We can trust his invitation because he's the one whom God has sent. He knows the father, the father knows him, and he reveals the father to his people.

Here we have a beautiful invitation reminding us that God is extending his grace to us. I want you to think about this for a moment.

I was trying to think of a good, you know, if you think about birthday invitations, sometimes those things can sound exclusive. And so I try not to, I try not to think of like using the idea of a birthday invitation.

[11 : 03] But I want you to think about if I stood up here and said, hey, everybody, after service today, we're heading to the mayor's house. And he's, I'm going to, don't worry, I'll let everybody in.

We'll go eat dinner. It'll be great. Sunday lunch with the mayor. And do I have the authority to even like, by the way, we're not doing that. Please don't show up. Unless he's here, then great.

That'd be awesome. No? Okay. But I don't have that kind of authority to just invite people in. I don't have the authority, the ability. Otherwise, it's just empty words.

Jesus is not offering empty words here. Jesus is offering a real invitation. And it's not just an invitation for you to know, hey, you're going to, you're going to have a good nap later.

You're going to have a good rest later. You're going to have a good, you know, day off. You're going to have a good time just kind of unplugging. Jesus is offering something much more in depth.

[12 : 11] So even though I can't invite you to the mayors, Jesus can invite us into the kingdom. And everything I studied, everything I looked at, everything I tried to wrestle with over the past few weeks has said this same thing.

This is a picture of God's initiating grace. This is a picture of God's grace at work. This is not an image. I cannot invite myself into the kingdom. I cannot invite myself into Jesus.

I cannot invite myself into a place. Only Jesus can do that. And so this is a picture in this invitation of the beauty of God's grace.

Because God's grace is extended from God himself. It is not something that he has done out of obligation. It is not something he has done out of his desire to take pity.

It is because he delights in his people and he aches over them. His desire is to see them become his own. And so Jesus says, you are welcome.

[13 : 25] You are welcome into his kingdom by this invitation. And I can't help, but we're going to read a long passage here in a second. If you would like to turn to Isaiah 55.

It made me wrestle, it makes me wrestle with Isaiah 55 a lot more. About this invitation that God's offering. Right? This is the prophet Isaiah speaking about Israel and God's compassion for his people.

Right? And you've probably heard some of these things before, probably around Easter. But in Isaiah 55, it says this. Come everyone who thirsts.

Come to the waters. And he who has no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk. Come without money, without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?

And your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligent to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and come to me. Hear that your soul may live.

[14 : 28] And I will make for you an everlasting covenant. My steadfast shore, my steadfast shore love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know. And a nation that did not know you shall run to you. Because of the Lord your God and of the Holy One of Israel. For he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are my ways your ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways. And my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven.

And do not return there, but water the earth. Make it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall my word be that goes from my mouth. And that shall not return to me empty.

[15 : 28] But shall accomplish that which I purpose. And shall succeed in the thing for which I was sent. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing.

And the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress. Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle. And it shall make a name for the Lord. An everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

All right, this is the part where I start my second sermon in the midst of my first sermon. I'm just kidding. Just kidding. Didn't land like I hoped it would. This picture of Isaiah inviting the prophet, God in himself inviting those who have nothing.

Nothing to offer. Who can pay for what the God, the feast at the table, the table that God's laid before us. Who can pay for this such a thing?

None of us. None of us could afford. None of us could pay for what God is offering. Jesus is offering this very thing.

[16 : 33] This life in God himself so that we might know this peace, this rest. And not just one that's temporary, but an everlasting promise.

An everlasting covenant. But who is Isaiah inviting in? Those with no money. Right? Why do you spend your money? That was your labor that doesn't satisfy.

Incline your ear. Come to me here that your soul may live. This is who Jesus is inviting in. Those who don't have it.

See, this is why our first thing is we want to see this picture of God's grace played out in this invitation. But who is that invitation to? And Isaiah is to those who don't have the money.

To those who don't have. Those who are found in their sin. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

[17 : 38] Who needs pardoning? Those who are sinful. And so Jesus, who is he offering this yoke, this rest, this peace to?

It's an invitation where God brings all sinners to himself. Where God brings these sinners to himself.

People broken by the fall. And so in verses 28 through 30, who is this for? It says, the burdened. Come to you who are heavy laden. I will find rest for your souls.

The yoke is easy. My burden is light. We have a burden. And in all the study I've looked at, there's this element of certainly our realities of the world that is broken.

Right? Like, look at, I probably threw it away by accident. No, it's here. It is hiding. Look at, honestly, I have looked at this 10,000 times. 10,000 times I've looked at the front cover of our bulletin.

[18 : 46] And I don't look at it often enough. To all who are weary and need rest. To all who mourn and long for comfort. To all who feel worthless and wonder if God cares.

To all who struggle and desire strength. To all who sin and need a savior. This is who God invites in. The burdened. Those burdened by keeping up.

Let's start there. Those who are trying to just keep up. And in this case, if he's addressing the requirements of the law and the Pharisees and those who would require everyone to just follow all these small little things to be perfect.

You know, this is who Jesus is addressing. That this, this is not a burden that's for you anymore. Those of us who are overwhelmed by the legal requirements of trying to keep up with what God desires from us, what we need.

Some, some level of salvation achievement. And for those of you that like, I don't know, play video games. We can't even, we can't level up in Christianity.

[19 : 56] There's no like next level. There's no way we can get the next Jesus achievement and be like, oh, I'm a little better today. Yeah, no, I'm, I'm, now I'm a level 92 Christian and I've handled it.

And one day I'll achieve a hundred. No. We don't live in a world where we could ever do that. We will always, until Jesus returns, struggle against sin and this desire to be perfect.

Perfect. And, and, and let's be honest. There's this, I, doing more as well that I think we, we, the keeping up with the Joneses that we embrace more often than we'd be willing to admit that I do.

That we struggle against. I've got to do more, be more Christian, make more things happen, make myself look good. Right? Right? We've got to face the reality that Jesus is not calling and inviting in people that have it all together.

He's calling in the sick. Jesus did not come for those who are righteous. Jesus came for those in need of a savior. And I'm grateful that we as a church acknowledge that every week when we print this on the bulletin.

[21 : 19] That we turn and we remind ourselves we too are in need of a savior. That this invitation is for those who are burdened by their struggle against sin.

And there's a great book. I know some of our, at least I know some of our high school guys, small groups have read parts of this for a while. Dane Ortlund's Gentle and Lowly.

And honestly, I could have gotten up here and just read the book for like the whole service. And you'll be like, yeah, much better sermon than yours, Bill. Yep. But there's lots of amazing, beautiful things that are, that can encourage you and I hope would encourage you in your pursuit of Jesus.

You're following Jesus. And I'm just going to read to you one because I'm not going to, I copied and pasted it so I wouldn't be fumbling around with another book. It says this. It says, When Jesus calls you to himself, when he invites you in, he is calling people that have been burdened by their struggle against sin.

And there's lots of things that we can name. Anxiety, fear, lust. There are so many things that we can actually look at personally in our own lives and wrestle with, that we are wrestling with.

[23 : 17] And Jesus came to offer a yoke that is light. Because the yoke of sin is heavy.

It is a burden that we cannot bear without consequences. And so, not only do we struggle against the sin of our hearts, the sin of our lives, we struggle against this idea, I think, more than anything.

Not idea more than anything. But I think we're all living in a world now that's vastly different than even, I would say, 20 years ago in some ways.

Now, I'm not going to say, oh, you younger generation, you don't know. I'm not here to say that. I'm almost curmudgeon. Not there yet. But I do wrestle, as someone who works with teenagers vocationally and have for the past 20 years, I do wrestle with this idea of how they live in a world where their computer is now in their pocket.

Right? The computer that we, like, hit dial up on and was, like, you know, made the weird noises all those years ago in the, you know, late 90s. Now it's faster than that and it's in their pocket.

[24 : 40] And there's this temptation, not just for teenagers, but for us as well, adults. We're living this problem, too. Or we try to project this perfect life. We try to project that we've got it all together.

Right? There's this burden of outward happiness, perfection, looking good, that we didn't, I didn't have to do that growing up.

Maybe it was in your local town. There's some degree of that. But I feel like we're curating images now. Curating images of who we are.

Making ourselves look better than we really are. And I think our students are living in a world that has just changed. It's not bad, good in some sense, but it's so different.

And so we can rest. We can rest from this. This is what Jesus offers. Look, look back here. It says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.

[25 : 45] You will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And so this yoke for those who are burdened is not one that's just another thing you have to do.

He's offering you rest. So when you think about this idea of your, you know, labor of achieving and earning, the things you have to do to make sure that you get through today and you do one more thing to make sure that you look good enough to have it all together.

And so everyone sees and then you go, okay, I just got to make one more cornbread stuffing. I got to make one more turkey. I got to make one more. I got to have all these things put together. So this invitation that's for burdened people offers us what?

This yoke that Jesus is offering us is what? It is something that brings healing to our souls, but it offers us freedom from the burdens of us trying to achieve and perform and win our salvation, which is something we can never do.

Something we can never do because Christ alone is the one who took our burden. Right? See, when Jesus, again, to quote from Dane Orland's book, not to promise the last one, this is who Jesus is.

[27 : 05] Meek, humble, gentle. Jesus is not trigger happy, not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated. He's the most understanding person in the universe.

The posture most natural to him is not a pointed finger, but open arms. You don't need to unburden or collect yourself and then come to Jesus.

Your very burden is what qualifies you to come. And so when you come, Jesus is not offering, hey, here's, you know, more tricks for you to figure out your life and do more to make things right.

But Jesus offers us freedom in his light and easy burden. So some of us here struggle against the idea of looking more Christian.

Some of us struggle against knowing what our sin is and wanting to even try and defeat it. Because we know we can't, there's this, we will never be able to. Some of us try and achieve our salvation by alternate methods.

[28 : 12] Why we want to show you how good and how righteous and how wonderful we are. And we do more and we say more and we go to more Bible studies and we go to more youth groups and we go to, we can achieve. And Jesus wants to set us free from even those burdens, though those are good things.

And when done with the right heart, mind and soul, when we come to Christ, those things are wonderful when done in a spirit of worship and honor towards our God.

But Jesus more than just unburdening us from the doing of life, he wants to unburden us to give rest for our souls. See, again, his resume speaks to us.

Who can unburden our souls? It's the God of Isaiah 55. He will abundantly pardon. See, God who is perfect and holy, he sent his son so that we might be made righteous.

See, if we think about this, when we think about yokes, right, we know what yokes are in the farming term, right? The burden, the thing you can put across your shoulders or for the farm animals that pull, right?

[29 : 23] They pull the different farm tool, farm equipment. Or it's something in some countries where you put a yoke over your shoulder and perhaps there's two buckets with water filled.

And so what Jesus really wants for you to do is to take off this yoke that's super heavy and terrible and put this other yoke that's super heavy and terrible and put that on instead, right? No, the irony is that Jesus is offering a yoke that is impossibly light.

Unbelievable. It doesn't, it can't be real. Jesus offers you a yoke that is light and not burdensome, but restful.

True rest. The yoke of Jesus is not the yoke of performing or the law or doing the things that you need to do. The yoke of Jesus is not the yoke of your sin where you continue to struggle against the brokenness of this world.

The yoke of simple faith and rest in Jesus. His yoke is gentle and lowly at heart because Jesus has the resume to show us that he is the one who offers himself to his people.

[30 : 29] See, 2 Corinthians 5. He who knew no sin became sin in order that we might become the righteousness of God. Jesus willingly takes off his perfect, simple, rested yoke, right?

And gives it to us and takes on the yoke of our sin in order that we might have life eternally. Relationship with the living God eternally. So we no longer in following Jesus are trying to earn anything, but Jesus in his sacrifice.

He has given us a yoke that is easy and light before the very God of the universe. A yoke that secures in us relationship with him.

And this is a relief. To me, it's been a relief to read these words over and over again the past few weeks. Because like you, I'm struggling with different things.

But in the past few weeks, I've also experienced relief in a different way. A few weeks ago, I had a splinter.

[31 : 49] A bad splinter. I'm not going to pull out any pictures, no pictures. It's for everyone's sake and everyone's sanity. It was in a spot that was very difficult on my hand.

And it was under my nail. And it was very big. It was not a tiny splinter. And when I tell you that for a few weeks, a few days, not weeks, that would be crazy.

A few days, I tried to weather it out and just say, I'm going to make it. And after the first day, it was tough. I talked to some of the doctors in our congregation.

And I was like, hey, what should I do about this? And someone found out, oh, I'll pull it out for you. So beautiful, removed. It was great. But I cannot tell you I have not felt relief from pain like that in a while.

I'm not bringing that up to be morbid or sick or disgusting or trying to make this even about something that happened to me. What I'm trying to describe for you is something I have not felt in a while.

[32 : 57] When I had that splinter removed from my finger, I can remember sitting down. And once it was out, it was almost, yeah, it was a piece that I had not felt.

It gave me anxiety for days. It made me feel overwhelmed. It made me feel like I had to think about everything in the context of this one tiny little injury. And like if you bumped my finger, it made me like tear up.

If I like looked at it and I could see my finger pulsing sometimes. It was terrible, but it affected everything about my life. And Jesus in his, the beauty of what he's come to do is take away this thorn, to take away this pain, this suffering, this reality that affects everything in your life.

You cannot walk through any day without sin affecting everything in your life. And Jesus has come so that you might have peace and rest.

That you might have a yoke that isn't burdensome. Yoke, a yoke that isn't one that overwhelms. One that offers you rest for your souls.

[34 : 10] Because Jesus is gentle and lowly in heart. Because Jesus is the one who went to the cross on our behalf. Because Jesus is the one who brings peace.

And so my hope and prayer for all of us here, including myself, I'll turn back to this passage a lot in the next few weeks still.

Is that we would turn to Jesus as the one who gives us real rest. True rest. Not rest from just busy schedules.

Not just rest from more practices and games and ferrying kids around and work and closing out the year well. Not just rest from those things. But rest that brings peace to our souls.

And my prayer is that as we head towards Christmas, we would remember that Jesus, who came on this mission, who came to be God with us.

[35 : 09] He came in order that we might know the living God. And we might find our rest in him. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for the rest we find in Jesus.

The peace we find in Christ. Father, as we think about all the things that burden us and overwhelm us and give us so much trouble, Lord, may we turn our eyes from those things.

May we find that you are present with us even now in the midst of those troubles. That you have not forsaken your people. Father, may we be found in you and in you alone.

So that we might know that there is real rest for our souls. And it's only found in Jesus. We thank you and we pray this in his name.

Amen. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.