

Come to me and I will give you 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: 27 October 2024

Preacher: David Todd

[0 : 00] Maybe just getting out of bed this morning was a victory, like a massive achievement. And if that's you this morning, I'm glad and I'm proud of you. I'm glad you're here.

Maybe getting out of the house this morning was too much for you. Maybe you're listening to this online and that's okay too. I'm glad that you're able to listen. That may be all that you can manage today and that's okay.

It's good that you're listening and maybe something that I share over the next 20 minutes or so will help and will encourage you. Because it doesn't really matter what it is that you're struggling with. We all bring our own burdens. They don't really compare to one another. It's not an auction, right? It's not like whose life is the most difficult. There's no winner for the worst problem. Your struggle this morning, whatever it is, is yours.

You're in it. It belongs to you. It's yours to manage and to live with. It's yours to negotiate. But it isn't yours alone, though.

[1 : 07] So I want you to picture Jesus as I read these words. When we come to read his words in Scripture. Now, I want you to picture him standing in front of you with his arms out towards you.

As if he's talking directly to you. It's Jesus who's asking you this this morning. It might help to close your eyes to think of that, just to picture Jesus.

Or if you want to follow along, I'm reading from Matthew 11 and verse 28. It's just three verses, though. So, it might just be someone you want to listen to me saying. These are the words of Jesus, I believe, for you this morning.

Jesus says, Are you having a real struggle? Come to me. Are you carrying a big load on your back? Come to me.

I'll give you a rest. Pick up my yoke and put it on. Take lessons from me. My heart is gentle, not arrogant. You'll find the rest you deeply need.

[2 : 11] My yoke is easy to wear. My load is easy to bear. Matthew 11, 28 to 30.

Jesus sees your struggle this morning. That's the first thing that I want you to notice from these verses. I want you to know that Jesus sees your struggle.

He's not guessing at this. He knows that you're going through a tough time. He knows that you are weighed down by these burdens. He knows that you are looking for answers.

You have been seen. You are seen by him this morning. Because often we feel isolated in our struggles.

And that's often the most difficult thing emotionally. We feel unseen. We feel ignored. We feel as though our troubles are hidden. Partly that's because we often keep how we're feeling to ourselves.

[3 : 14] We pretend that everything is okay. How are you doing? I'm fine. It's a facade. A mask that we put on.

A veneer of acceptable coping. We all do it. We put on this mask. And we hope that the mask won't slip. Even to those of us who know us best.

And this is the really crazy thing in our lives. Those whom we know love us. We keep that mask.

That veneer on. Jesus sees you this morning.

You don't have to pretend. And he is a safe place. For you to be honest. For you to be yourself. In front of him. What Jesus is offering you this morning.

Isn't a nice idea. It's all horrific words. Thoughts and prayers. I get so frustrated when I hear that. People offering response to some tragedy.

[4 : 21] Jesus isn't offering you thoughts and prayers this morning. Jesus offers real help. Coming to him will make a genuine, tangible difference in your life.

It's not just an idea or a concept or a philosophy. It's real change. It's real change that Jesus offers you. So Jesus sees you. And he offers to take your burden from you.

Now I want you to notice that he's not saying, I can help you to cope with this thing. He's offering real change. Sometimes you hear people pray that.

That they might cope with their problems. Lord help me to cope. Give me the strength to cope. I used to work in prisons. And they talked a lot in prisons about having coping strategies.

Jesus doesn't want you to cope this morning. He wants things to change for you. They are direct opposites. Don't accept coping.

[5 : 25] Take Jesus' offer to change your life. He sees you. He offers to take your burden from you. So how does he do that? How does that work?

You see, I'm a practitioner. I like things to work. I like ideas and concepts as well. But at heart I like things to be real. I like things to be practical.

I like things that are objective. It's not enough for me just to say, Oh, Jesus loves you. I want to know how. How does Jesus love me? How does Jesus love you? How does that work?

How does that change anything? How does that make a difference? And Jesus says, Come to me. Come to me and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke. Put it on.

Take lessons from me. Take my yoke. That's how he changes your life. When you take his yoke and put it on.

[6 : 21] Now what does that mean? I'm glad you asked. The picture that may come to your mind, and probably you've been taught this before, is of an ox with a kind of bridle over its shoulders.

A carefully fitted wooden yoke that they would use to pull the plough, or whatever it is they pull. I'm not a farmer. The yoke was made for a specific ox.

It was made to fit that particular ox. So it was comfortable. It was fitted for them alone. And that's the metaphor that Jesus is using here. A yoke that's made for you, that's personal to you.

But that's not really what Jesus is talking about. The yoke is a metaphor for Jesus' teaching. You see, the yoke is what each rabbi called his particular understanding, his explanation and application of the scriptures, of the law.

That was his yoke. So some rabbis might be okay with you going for a walk on the Sabbath. Some might say you can only walk to synagogue or temple.

[7 : 28] Some rabbis might say you could water your animals on the Sabbath. Some might say that constituted works and you couldn't do it. Some rabbis were really strict. And a few, not many, were less dogmatic about how they applied the law.

That was their yoke. Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Jesus talks a lot about this in the Bible.

See, he's very critical of the religious leaders. In fact, it's the religious leaders that Jesus saves his greatest condemnation for. Let me just jump forward a bit to Matthew 23.

The scribes and Pharisees, he said, sit on the seat of Moses. So you must do whatever they tell you and keep it, but don't do the things they do.

You see, they talk, but they don't do. They tie up heavy bundles, which are difficult to carry, and they dump them on people's shoulders. But they themselves aren't prepared to lift a little finger to move them.

[8 : 33] Everything they do is for show, to be seen by people. Yes, they make their prayer boxes large and their prayer tassels long. Jesus says that his interpretation and application of the law is easy, comfortable, not a burden.

I want to look at a couple of examples of that. Just moving forward into chapter 12. Jesus goes on to say, specifically, how we understand it and how we might look at this new way of understanding the law.

More than that, it's not just really understanding. Because understanding is about head knowledge. And head knowledge doesn't really get you anywhere in relationships. It doesn't really get you anywhere in this new way of living under the law in Christ through him.

So chapter 12 in Matthew, starting from verse 6, the Pharisees are questioning Jesus about the Sabbath. Let me tell you this. Something greater than the temple is here.

If you'd known what this saying means, mercy, not sacrifice, is what I really want. You wouldn't have passed judgment on blameless people. Yes, you see, the Son of Man is master of the Sabbath too.

[9 : 55] He left the place and went into their synagogue where there was a man with a withered hand. They put the question to him, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? They asked this so that they could frame a charge against him.

Supposing one of you is just one sheep, replied Jesus, and it falls into a ditch on the Sabbath. You'll grab it and haul it out, won't you? Well then, think how much more important a human being is than a sheep.

So you see, it is permitted to do good on the Sabbath. Then he said to the man, stretch out your hand. He stretched it out and it was restored to health just like the other one.

What Jesus offers is real change from the inside out. It's a new way of relating to God, a new way of relationship with God.

But not just that. It's a new way of relationship with community, with one another and even with ourselves. It's a radical rethinking of how faith works. Jesus sees you.

[11 : 00] He removes your burden and He offers you a new way of living your life. It's nothing less than that. There's this misconception amongst people that following Jesus means that we have to live some pious, religious, limited life.

That following Jesus means living a life that's boring and joyless, full of rules designed to take away any of our fun, and the truth is it's quite the opposite.

Jesus offers life and life to the full. You're not called to a righteousness that you cannot attain to. I want to say that again.

You're not supposed to be righteous in a way that you can't manage and then judged on your failure to achieve that. See, that's how some people think that Christianity works.

They think that's what the doctrines of Jesus are, that some of God set out these rules and laws that we can't keep and then condemns us to death and judges us because we can't keep them.

That is not how it works.

[12 : 10] That's a vicious lie. It's not the Christian faith. It's not all the rules that Jesus sets. And then when we fail to meet His impossible standard, we're condemned to hell.

It's the opposite of what Jesus says. Jesus says, my yoke is easy. My burden is light. If we do good and act righteously, it's only a reflection of the grace that Jesus has shown us.

It just speaks into the video that we watched. When we do good and act righteously, when we do these good things, it's not because we're trying to win God's favor. It's a reflection of the grace that we live in that Jesus has shown us.

Our good acts don't get us favor with God. There's no amount of good that could win God's favor. It is grace and grace alone that allows for this new life in Jesus.

That's what Jesus is offering you today. Now, I realize that I'm jumping a bit about through the chapters of Matthew a little bit here from 11 and then to 12, and I want to finish by taking you into chapter 13.

[13 : 21] The thing is, if you look through these chapters, if you read them later on today maybe or during the week, and I thought I'd recommend them to you. If you read through 11, 12, and 13, you'll see that all of these chapters, all of this amazing stuff, all of this incredible teaching of Jesus, I think it all happens on the same day.

It all follows on in a narrative, and you see that the start of chapter 11 that says Jesus is moving on to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee, and then every section after that, every chapter, every little paragraph starts with, it says then, and then at that time, and then then, and then, and while he was still talking that same day, and then suddenly we're into chapter 13, and Jesus starts talking in parables and teaching through these parables, and I think it's all part of the same thought process. So forgive me if you feel like I'm jumping about a bit or just cherry picking. I'm trying to take you on that little journey, the same journey, I think, that Jesus was taking his disciples through when he taught them, I think, all at the one, in the one day.

It feels to me like it's just building on some of the ideas and precepts that Jesus is putting out there. It's all part of the same thought. He explores different ideas in these chapters, but there's this strong thread that runs through them.

It's all part of the same process, and it culminates in these parables that Jesus begins to teach in, talking about the kingdom of heaven, telling us what the kingdom of heaven is like.

[14 : 54] Now, the kingdom of heaven isn't where you go when you die. The kingdom of heaven is what it's like to follow Jesus today in this life.

It's what happens when you give your burdens to Jesus. It's what happens when you take on his yoke. The kingdom of heaven is another way of saying your relationship with God through Jesus. It's not some future hope. It's not something that we have to try and attain to in the time to come. The kingdom of heaven can be a present reality for you.

It is a present reality. A couple of verses from Matthew 13 starting at verse 45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a trader who was looking for fine pearls and who found one that was spectacularly valuable.

He went off and sold everything he possessed and bought it. I love that parable. It's probably, if you're allowed a favorite parable, it's probably my very favorite.

[15:59] I love it because I think it's so spectacularly misunderstood in my humble opinion. See, I used to think that it meant that knowing Jesus was worth giving everything up for.

That the peril of great value was the gospel. The good news, the Jesus story. Because what could be more valuable than our salvation? What could be more valuable than forgiveness?

That's what the kingdom of God offers us, forgiveness. forgiveness. Surely, that's worth giving up everything for. Knowing Jesus must be the most valuable thing in all creation.

You'd totally expect the Bible to say that, right? So this Bible says to us that if you're presented with the, sorry, this parable says to us that if you're presented with the opportunity to accept Jesus and become a Christian, it'd be worth giving up everything precious to you.

that the value of knowing Jesus outweighs everything else in your life. Now that's true. But that's not what this parable says.

[17:05] Jesus isn't asking you to sell anything to come to him. In fact, he's offering to take your burden from you. He's serving you.

It's Jesus who's making the purchase. It's Jesus who's paying the price because it costs you nothing to accept Jesus. That allows you to enter into this relationship with God.

You can't pay for it. You couldn't afford it anyway. That's the thing of spectacular value. It's not the gospel that's the thing of great price in this parable.

It's you. You are the pearl. You are the thing that God sees as so valuable, so beautiful so spectacular that he's willing to give up everything to include you in his kingdom.

You're not the trader. You're not the one doing the buying. God is. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a trader who is looking for fine pearls and who found one that was spectacularly valuable.

[18:15] He went off and sold everything he possessed and he bought it. Isn't that beautiful? You are the pearl. And Jesus gave up everything to have you in his kingdom.

The price he paid was his life when he died for your sin. When he died so that you might be redeemed, so that you might be forgiven. And that's how Jesus sees you today.

He sees you as beautiful. He sees you as spectacular. He sees you and he says, come to me.

Come with your burdens. Come with your worries. Come with your troubles. Come with your sin. Come with your brokenness, your hurt, your guilt.

Come and give it all to me. And follow me. Replace all of that with this new life, this new yoke, this new understanding.

[19:16] Replace all of that with my love and my mercy and my grace. That is what it's like to follow Jesus. He is gentle and humble, not overbearing, but gracious and restorative.

He says that following him leads to peace, to rest. I love that. because life is so tumultuous. Life is pressured on every side.

It's hard and it's exhausting. Following Jesus is the way to life and peace. In him is healing and wholeness. When he asks you to come to him today, will you accept him?

Will you make that decision to follow him today? And Jesus asks people to come and it's important that he does because it's an action. He doesn't ask them to believe.

He doesn't ask them to understand or to know. He asks them to take a physical action and I think that's important. Right now you may be sitting there thinking, yes, yes I believe that.

[20:21] I believe in Jesus or I want to believe that. I want to trust him. You may be thinking that this sounds good. This sounds right. It's one thing to decide to believe that in your head.

but Jesus asks you to come to make a physical move, to do something, not just to think something. Now I'm not going to ask you to come forward today, but I am going to ask you to make a physical declaration.

I'm going to ask everyone to close their eyes, to sit for a moment in peace. Close your eyes, bow your heads. I'm going to pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for your grace, for your mercy, for your love for us. We thank you that you see us. We thank you that you are with us, alongside us, that you stand with us.

Lord Jesus, I ask that you would encourage us today, literally make us brave today, Lord, to make a decision to follow you, to make that decision to come to you and to give our burdens, our load, whatever it is that's weighing us down, our troubles, our struggles, our sin, our guilt, our hurts.

[21 : 54] Lord Jesus, make us brave to give them to you today. Lord Jesus, I thank you that we can trust in you. Thank you that you offer us this new way, this kingdom of heaven that we can be part of today.

So I pray, Father God, that those of us who don't know you, who want to know you, who want to make that decision for you, Lord, I pray you would encourage them that you would just minister to them in this place today.

Just keep your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I just want to make you that offer. If you want to follow Jesus today, if you want to come to him and give your burdens your hands over to him, just put your hand up if you're ready to accept Jesus.

Nobody else can see, it's just you and I and most importantly Jesus. If you want to come to him, if you want him to forgive your sins, if you want him to take that burden from you, just slip up your hand.

If you want to know his peace, his rest, if you're ready to follow Jesus. Just keep praying for a minute or so.

[23 : 21] Thank you Jesus for your truth, for the certainty of salvation, for the assurance of your love, for your mercy and peace, your grace and love.

We thank you that you take our burdens from us. We thank you that following you is a blessing and not a burden. Following you is joy and freedom.

Thank you for those who have trusted in you today, for each of us who walk with you, for each of us who know your love and your mercy.

God, we give all of this back to you in worship. All we can do in response is to declare you Lord Savior, to look on your majesty in awe.

Father, we thank you for your blessings and we return that to you and bless you. In Jesus' name, do we have another hymn?

[24 : 36] Thank you.