

Invited to Rest – Matthew 11:25-30

Everyone loves to receive an invitation, but what about an invitation from God – would you want to hear it? God is aware of each of our needs, and the Gospel responds, not only addressing our need, but providing far beyond whatever we could imagine. This series is looking at some of those invitations from the Gospel and how we can respond to those invitations.

The passage we are looking at today (Matthew 11:28-30) contains one of the most well-known of Jesus' invitations, what is on offer is a reward that we all long for and that we all need, an invitation to rest. His rest is more essential to life than sleep and is a gift God is eager to give. In this passage we see that the rest that we are invited to receive requires 3 things.

1) We must Come to Jesus

Many of us spend time, working on our lives, trying to look right, to have the right relationships, the right career, the right car, the right house, the right partner, the right family. What is the restlessness, and rest that Jesus is referring to in this passage? The preceding verses are the context in which Jesus makes this great invitation (see verses 25-27). The context is belief in him, is knowing who he is and knowing whom he reveals. Jesus wants you to know His Father and to realize he is your Father too.

In view of the context and that Jesus specifically says His rest is 'for souls' we must conclude then, that He is referring to those who have not yet come to believe upon Him. He isn't dismissing those who would say 'they don't believe', far from it, He is sensitive to their need and eager to respond. He is addressing the restlessness of people's souls, so in affect He is speaking to the individuals in the crowd and He sees that deep down, in the place where their emotion and identity, is a yoke and it's utterly debilitating. Jesus really does care, and He does see the state of every person's heart.

A yoke was a wooden beam that had two large metal rings either side that would connect together two animals. The yoke would then be attached to some load, a burden that might be a plough or a cart. So a common example would be two oxen attached to one another and pulling together a cart. Jesus says you are yoked to something that isn't helping you; it is slowing you up and you're exhausted. Your yoke is tough, it is heavy and you are labouring under it.

If you want rest for your soul, if you want to be free from the striving to prove yourself and to be someone; you need to come to Jesus. Believe Jesus to be The Son and allow Him to reveal The Father to you and then you will discover the person you were created to be. To put your faith in Jesus, is to come to Him, to be yoked to Him, and together you live life, and He helps you to the extent whereby your burden becomes light

Q. What is it that gives your life purpose? What is your great hope? What is it that keeps you up at night? Who, or what are you yoked to?

Q. How does the restlessness of these goals pull back and weigh like a heavy yoke?

2) We must Learn from Jesus

Jesus calls himself gentle and lowly in heart. In other words, He is calm, He is not flustered and He does not have a need to prove himself or wave His credentials around. Consider Colossians 1; Jesus is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Saviour of *All Things*. If anyone should be feeling heavy laden, surely it's the one who would suffer and die for the sins of the world and yet He describes His yoke as easy, and His burden as light. Why did Jesus not boast and brag about his power and identity? Why could he remain calm when all the chaos of the universe was about to be unleashed upon him at the cross? It was simply this, He knew how loved He was by His Father and therefore that He had nothing to prove to anyone else.

If we come to God through Jesus we too have nothing to prove. Responsibilities and duties are not bad in themselves. However, if they are what define you, what give you purpose, they will be a heavy burden. Our confidence rests in believing upon Jesus as our Saviour, the one we are yoked to, we look to him the author and perfecter of our faith. The reason why Jesus' yoke is easy and burden is light, is this: Jesus has proven me before The Father, I have no need therefore to prove myself before man, or even before God, and that is true rest for souls.

Q. Who are you trying to prove yourself to? Whose approval are you working hard to gain?

Q. How do you think God views you? What does the Bible say about how God views you?

3) We must Become like Jesus

If we are yoked with Jesus, we are working with Him. We must become like Him. How do we become like Him? If you are thinking that to become like Jesus means you must perform miracles, teach the bible, wear sandals and grow a beard, then you've missed it.

Here's what it means to become like Jesus. To know the love of The Father, enjoy the love of The Father! As we enjoy The Father's love we will grow increasingly aware that our true identity is found not in our career, marital status, achievements or wealth but in being His beloved and precious sons and daughters. We will no longer be striving to 'prove' ourselves, but will be rooted and established in the love of God. That is rest for the soul! Come to Jesus, learn from Jesus and become like Jesus.

Q. How does Jesus' life provide an example of knowing God's love that we can follow?

Q. How does the love shown in the Gospel provide freedom and rest from the heavy burdens we put on ourselves?