Hidden from the wise and prudent

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[0:00] Turn with me now to the Gospel by Matthew, chapter 11, reading from verse 25. Matthew's Gospel, the 11th chapter, from verse 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.
Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.
Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. The words of Jesus, recorded in the section of this chapter which we read, were spoken towards the close of the Galilean ministry.
[1:42] And we find that they contain condemnation, self-disclosure, and gospel encouragement.

As to the form of the words, we find prophecy, prayer, proclamation, and promise.
And at these four things, we may look in turn for a little. First, there is prophecy.
We have at the beginning of our text, the words at that time. In Luke's gospel, we have a more precise definition of when the words were spoken, in that hour.
Here, it would seem that Matthew is looking back to what precedes, as far back at any rate as verse 20.
[2:57] And there, from verse 20 to verse 24, we have the part that comes under prophecy. For we have Jesus foretelling what was to be the destiny of those cities where he had preached, where he had performed miracles, and where faith in him was wanting on the part of the majority of the people.

And as we look at this prophecy, running from verses 20 to 24, we may note the following points that are borne out.
First, that there are times of special opportunity. times of special opportunity in the providence of God.
The three cities mentioned, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, had their greatest opportunity in the days when Jesus preached among their people and performed mighty works there.
But as we have seen, the majority of them did not respond in faith and penitence. Now, in the ordinary affairs of life, it is a common place that there are times of special opportunity.
[4:41] There is a tide in the affairs of men which, if taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. But that kind of thing is true not only of secular life, but of the spiritual life.

There are times of opportunity given to all who are under the hearing of the gospel, who live in an environment where the impact of Christian preaching is not spent, around whom there are those who are being touched by the spirit, who are privileged to gather together as you are gathered this evening on the Sabbath, on the evening of a communion Sabbath, when many of the Lord's people are praying for a blessing upon themselves and upon the unsaved.
These are times of special opportunity. But apart from that, the scripture tells us that the days of youth are days of special opportunity, particularly where the word of God is in circulation, where the word of God is heard and its impact is felt.
Remember now, says the word of God, thy creator, in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.
And there is a special promise to the young. They that seek me early shall find me. The days of youth are days of special opportunity.

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[6:14] But we notice further from the words of Christ in this prophetic part that the period of privilege is limited. It was limited in the experience of these condemned cities.

The Galilean ministry was drawing to its close. These people would never again hear the preaching of Jesus. Find Jesus in the flesh in their midst and benefit by his mighty works.
The day of opportunity was closing. And we find in Luke 19 and 41 that Jesus on his last visit to Jerusalem as he was approaching the city came to a point of vantage from which he could see it. and he wept aloud. The word that is used of him whipping at the grave of Lazarus means that tears were coming down softly.
But in connection with his view of Jerusalem and his reaction to it he wept aloud lamenting that the opportunity of the city had been missed.
[7:27] If thou hadst known he said even thou at least in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace but now they are hid from thine eyes. And he went on to tell of the destruction of that great city which came to pass some 40 years later through the Romans.

Through there was a period after Pentecost of blessing there but the majority of the city turned away from the gospel and they and the city perished.
Now in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 Paul is speaking of the hindrances to belief in Jesus Christ.
He is answering a problem probably that some of the believers at Corinth had. Why is it that so many people whom we might have expected to believe to welcome the message of the gospel have not done so?
And Paul replies thus if our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are perishing in whom the God of this world has blinded their eyes the eyes of their understanding so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should not shine unto them.
[8:51] when the gospel is being preached when the Bible is being read when Christian influences are making their impact felt then the prince of darkness is active doing his best to blind the hearers to hold them back from responding to the gospel in faith for their salvation and that is why the word should be read with prayer for the counteracting influence of the Holy Spirit why we should seek that the Holy Spirit would be poured out from on high that the gospel would be preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven touching the hearts of the hearers and the ears of the hearers opening their hearts as Lydia's heart was opened when she gave an unusual attention to the things that Paul was speaking and received Christ into her heart Jonathan Edwards somewhere says that a revival is the result of an unusual attention to the preaching of the gospel the next thing that we notice is that accountability is in proportion to privilege that is made clear by what is said about these cities those cities where Jesus preached had enjoyed far greater privileges than the ancient cities that were condemned by the

Old Testament prophets or that perished in Old Testament times they had never seen the Savior they had never heard the gospel there was scarcely perhaps a witness to God's truth amongst them and what Christ is saying here that at the day of judgment it would be it will be more tolerable for people who have never heard the gospel than for those who heard the gospel and neglected it and turned away from it we have a twofold judgment mentioned in these predictions of Jesus there was the perishing of the city itself in the course of earthly history in each case but there was also the judgment that awaited its inhabitants at the last day now says Paul right into the Romans every one of us will give account of himself to God you and I my friend will stand before God to give an account of the deeds done in the body and may his mercy attend us in preparation for it and be upon us at that time the second point that I want to emphasize for a little is that we have here in the words of Jesus prayer prayer from verses 25 to 26 we are told that Jesus said
I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight you may remember that Luke introduces these words in a somewhat different manner he tells us that at that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit what a wonderful thing we tend to think of Jesus as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and so he often was but Jesus went about with a joy and peace in his heart of which he could speak almost on the eve of his crucifixion these things he said to his disciples in one of his last addresses have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full he spoke also of his peace but here is a word that means that he exalted in spirit and about what did he exalt we have been thinking of a situation that must have been greatly disappointing to Christ that many of his heroes to whom he proclaimed the word of truth had not been prepared to receive it and had exposed themselves to judgment on that account and here

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we have not very long afterwards probably
Jesus exalting in spirit why because the whole result of his preaching was not failure or want of success because the father had been pleased to draw some into the kingdom the father had been pleased to bring people into the kingdom that men may have thought least likely to come in not the learned men not the wise and prudent but those who had less opportunities and privileges educationally and socially and otherwise these were drawn into the kingdom and he was thinking particularly probably of his twelve apostles eleven of whom were truly believing men and here we have Jesus expressing gladness at a time that must have been greatly disappointing for him and in the expression of that gladness he recognizes the sovereignty of his father he addresses
God as father the people who often said that he was blaspheming when he claimed to be the son of God in a unique fashion but here he speaks most strongly of that relationship and he acknowledges himself to be the servant of the father for man's salvation the servant of the father who was ready to acquiesce in his father's will whereas that will might be very disappointing to him from his human outlook or he says because I thank thee oh father lord of heaven and earth he is sovereign in the universe and Christ recognizes here that he is sovereign in the matters of salvation it had been the father's will he recognized that this should be hidden from the wise and prudent this gospel of his grace and revealed savingly to some of the least likely now we have here brought together in scripture the problem of divine sovereignty and human responsibility scripture itself does not resolve it but we have it here and the son of God acknowledging it and here he is acknowledging what as I said must have been disappointing and grievous for himself that many to whom he preached the word did not believe yet he says even so father for so it seemed good in thy sight and that is what the preacher of the gospel must do he must depend the preacher of the gospel must depend upon the blessing of God as God sees fit upon the preached word or the red word for God is the one who initiates the work of salvation
[16:32] God is the one who brings home to one person here and another there as he chooses the word with saving power and Jesus here acknowledges his father's sovereignty that he praises God for the measure of blessing that had attended the word now here surely we may learn a lesson from the savior we may have things in our experience which are disappointing which are grievous but we ought to acknowledge in all the sovereignty of God to seek his blessing in his providence and if we are God's people to seek his blessing even through the things that are disappointing and to remember the many blessings that we have received over against the things that may be disappointing and trying of which we were utterly undeserving thirdly we have here proclamation for Jesus goes on to say probably principally to his disciples around him at the time all things are delivered unto me of my father here he is speaking he is revealing the authority which belongs to him all things he says are delivered unto me of my father at the end of this gospel we read that he said after he rose from the dead all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth go ye therefore here he claims to have entrusted to him all things perhaps in this passage the emphasis is upon the truth he was to teach but elsewhere it is said the father loveth the son and hath given all things into his hands into his power and why did the father give all things into the power of Jesus the son of God in human nature he did it out of love to the son and through him out of love to his people that all the truth and power at Christ's disposal might be used for the furtherance of God's purpose in the extension of his kingdom in the ingathering of the lost his people in their most holy faith the knowledge at his disposal he claims here to be so great that God alone can know and understand him and that he alone knew God the knowledge at his disposal he knew God in all his power in all his holiness in all his love knew him as the God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life and when he uttered the invitation that follows he did it in compassion in pity and compassion he looked around as he often did and saw men and women bearing all kinds of burdens some burdened with the cares and trials of this life some burdened with a sense of frustration in trying to free themselves from the power of besetting sin some burdened with a sense of the futility and vanity and meaninglessness of human life as it appeared to them some burdened because they had been taught by the Pharisees to wear to wear the yoke of the law when a young Jew came to 13 years of age a male Jew he was said to take on the yoke of the law he accepted responsibility for keeping the law himself

now the Pharisees were not content with the mere law as it was stated by Moses the Pharisees added hundreds of precepts to the law professing to apply it to all sorts of situations and

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relationships of life and Christ pronounced a curse upon the Pharisees because they made great burdens and grievous to be born and laid them on people's shoulders and would not carry them themselves and so you had poor people burdened with a sense of sin but trying to earn their own salvation by keeping these numerous precepts that the Pharisees taught were necessary in order to fulfill God's way and to ensure a position in his kingdom that is probably the contrast that is here between Christ's yoke and the yoke of the law he saw people burdened in this way they were unable to do anything to save themselves they were grieved they were burdened they had a sense of hopelessness and he said in his compassion come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest here we have the invitation issued out of compassion notice that he calls them to himself come unto me he is
God's inexpressible gift to man he is the gift of God's inexpressible love and through his cross he has been commended by God to man the love of God is commended to man God commends his love to us in that Christ died for the ungodly now when God entrusted all knowledge to his son to reveal it as the son saw fit to men in ignorance of God's character in ignorance of God's provision for salvation in ignorance of the free grace of God available to those who sought it in earnest when he entrusted Christ with all the risen Christ with all the authority and power and on earth that belong in heaven and in earth that belongs to him at this time he showed his confidence in the son in the saviour whom he had appointed and if God places all confidence in Christ as the sole saviour of men apart from trusting in whom there is no salvation surely we should seek wisdom and grace from God that we too would place sufficient confidence in him to entrust to him our souls and our whole persons for time and for eternity so we come to the promise made
I will give you rest now what does that mean in the first place it means relief from the burden of guilt guilt my friend is the link that binds sin to its punishment a former minister of this church used to say defining guilt guilt is not the sin and guilt is not the punishment guilt is the link that binds the sin to the punishment and if you are here tonight in an unconverted state one end of that threefold chain is around thy neck and the other end is an everlasting perdition but Christ removes the burden of guilt from those who trust in him Christ also gives relief from the tyranny of sin from the tyranny of the self-centered life in that he makes the person
Christ centered Christ is the center of his life the center of his aims the center of his hopes and he relieves the burden of futility by a growing resemblance to himself produced by the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul take my yoke upon you he says accept my teaching my way of life and learn of me why for I am meek and lowly in heart submissive to the will of God seeking his glory accepting his will thus he gives rest it is not the rest of idleness it is the restfulness of heart and mind that will enable a person strengthened by the spirit to go about his or her work the more cheerfully the more hopefully the more vigorously and even when we think of the future and the rest that remains to the people of
[25:53] God to which Christ will bring every sinner entrusted to him for salvation it is not the rest of idleness we talk of heaven so often as a place of rest and very often people in the weariness of this life are glad to think of it as that and it is that indeed but yet one of the last pictures we have of the saints in glory is this it is said of them that his servants shall serve and they shall see his face and his name will be in their forage probably meaning in the last case there that God will acknowledge his perfected work in them and then they will come to the rest that is rest indeed freedom from every hindering and distressing influence to serve God with gladness in the power of the indwelling spirit so then let me leave with you these thoughts there is peril and delay if any of you here have a desire within your hearts to come to

Christ this night do not be like Felix who said to Paul that he would call for him when he had a more convenient season for the evil one is on the lookout for people who procrastinate who put off to do all in his power in the interval to hold them fast for himself that at the last they may share that dreadful experience where they will be with the devil and his angels beware of delay take take take take note of the pleasure that Christ has in saving souls there is joy said Christ in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents he rejoiced in spirit because of those who had repented compared to the few in his own day far more people it is the wonder of the new testament that it reveals to us that far more people came to Christ after his resurrection and ascension than came before his death through his own ministry his apostles by his grace did greater things under God than he did in that direction because that was God's will the story is told of an English parish minister who had in his study a picture of a wreck from which one man was been saved and

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sometimes he told his visitors the history of that picture it happened that around his church there was a beautiful piece of ground a buried place and a visitor to the area passing it one day was so attracted by it that he felt it was a beautiful place for the dead to lie and that he would like to lie in that place when he died so he called upon the minister and asked if there was any possibility of his purchasing ground in that cemetery he was led round the cemetery looked at one position and another and at last came to a place that satisfied him and he said
I would like to lie there they went together to the place where the register was kept his name was entered the number of the ground was noted the money was paid and he was going away and at the gate the minister said to him now you have found a resting place for your body have you found rest for your soul to which he replied nobody ever asked me that question before he went away said no more some time afterwards the minister received a parcel in which that picture was a rather striking picture of a person being rescued from a wreck and there was a letter accompanying it which thanked the minister for the question and told him he would like to have that picture as a memorial of the result of his question for he couldn't get rid of the question until he went to the savior who said come unto me and I will give you rest and coming to him he found mercy he found hope for eternity good hope through grace and he was very grateful for that question take with you the question my friend have you found rest for your soul if you have reason to doubt it seek
Christ seek rest seek the assurance of salvation the author of the well-known hymn abounding grace wrote also this in another hymn thinking of the words of invitation in Matthew here thy promise is my only plea with this I venture nigh thou callest burden souls to thee and such oh lord am I will you not friend if you are outside the fold come this evening before you leave this church to him who says I am the door I am the door by me if any man enter in he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture let us pray oh lord our god we thank thee for a great savior deliver us from neglecting the great salvation do an awakening work among the unconverted draw seekers to thyself cause light to shine upon their way may god shine into their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of jesus christ may they hear the voice of jesus inviting them to his mercy may they take note of the freeness of his offer whosoever will let him take the water of life freely grant them grace to receive christ in all that he is as the savior of his people and to commit themselves unreservedly to him that he may bless them with the blessings of salvation that he may be evermore the companion of their way and the guide of their footsteps that they may find themselves numbered with the blessed people to whom he said i go to prepare a place for you and if i go and prepare a place for you i will come again and receive you unto myself that where i am there ye may be also forbid that anyone in this gathering young middle-aged or old should at last hear the awful word depart but rather may each one in the multitude of thy mercies and the abundance of thy grace hear the invitation come ye blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world do thou take us in safety to our abodes follow with blessing this day's services pardoning all sin connected with them watch over us for good throughout the night be in the communion service on the last day services on the last day of the feast manifest in thy presence and drawing sinners to thyself we ask it with the blessings we ought to have asked and need and have not asked in
[34:14] Jesus name amen

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