

Come unto me

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the scripture we read and to consider words very familiar I'm sure to us all at the end of the chapter from verse 28.

For our Lord says, Come unto me, all ye that labor and that have it laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am weak and lonely in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. In this particular chapter, Matthew presents us with different pictures, almost like small snapshots of our Lord in action.

If we look from verse 20, we can find from there to the end of the chapter three distinct pictures. Or learn of different postures toward the people.

The first is rather unusual, perhaps not his most characteristic posture. The posture of denunciation. If you would like to express it so, it is the posture of the man with a clenched fist.

[1 : 28] As he denounces the judgment of God upon the unrepentant cities of Corazion and Bethsaida and Papua New.

This is not, as we have said, the most familiar posture adopted by the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is one that we disregard at our peril.

It is he, after all, who is most explicit in regard to the judgment of God upon the unrepentant.

It is he who tells us about the one that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched. It is he who speaks to us of the separation that will come about in the great day of judgment.

And God, when there will be a separation like a shepherd separating a sheep from the goats. It is our Lord who spoke to us about people who come too late.

[2 : 35] People who came to the wedding feast and found the door shut against them. Foolish virgins who had brought no oil in their land.

And he cried out to him, open them to us. And he says to them, I tell you, I never knew you. We cannot really understand the full odd teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And blessed with including it, this message of judgment to come. The fact that God looks upon men and that he will judge them in one, a party to each his just portion.

Maybe there is something to reflect upon in the very fieriness of the references. The very reluctance that God has, as it were, to speak on this particular topic.

It is not God's pleasure that the wicked should perish. As I am in, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked not that the wicked turn from his evil way and live.

[3 : 55] Turn, turn, turn, for how will you die, O house of Israel? Believe in the prophecies of Hosea. You can appreciate, when they say, express it, you can appreciate the divine tension.

The reluctance that God has to deliver up a people to whom his word has come. How shall I give thee up, he asks Ephraim.

How shall I give thee up? How shall I hand you over, O Israel? An unwillingness. And it's that very reluctance, that very unwillingness, that adds intensity to the reality, and that serves notice upon us, as the grim reality that is, that faces us, that if we be impermanent, we come under the clenched fist of denunciation.

That's the first picture. The second posture in which Matthew has presented our Lord here is a much more familiar one.

The attitude of prayer, of supplication, of thanksgiving. Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

[5 : 21] Many of our lords are separating himself from the people from time to time, and spending that time in prayer to his God and Father.

And the prayer that's offered at this point, that we can't penetrate all the mystery of the expression, revealing that thou hast revealed thee, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

This prayer does remind us of the direct interest of the Father in the work of redemption that was carried through and the price of which was paid by his Son.

It is God who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for his own. It is the Father who so loved the world that he gave up his own Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And our Lord himself tells us that it was his concern always to do the things that were pleasing to his Father. I do nothing out of mere self-pleasure but to please him that sent me.

[6 : 38] My Father works hitherto, and I work. And what our Lord is drawing attention to here is that people who follow the wisdom of the world, the statement he makes in this prayer is somewhat parallel to the statement he made after the healing of a blind man.

For judgment can I come into this world that they who see might be made blind and that those who are blind might see. If we follow the wisdom of this world, if we adopt our own philosophy and are determined to work out things just according to our own innate abilities, then, according to the truth, the world by wisdom knew not God.

The Father has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. That second picture might be the picture of our Lord with upraised arms in prayer.

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. The third posture, and the one in which we want to concentrate for a few moments, is in the verses from verse 28.

This is our Lord with outstretched arms, the arms of welcome, bidding people come to him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[8 : 16] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, put our own meek and glory in heart, and you shall find rest into your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

It is a picture of our Lord in a characteristic posture of invitation. Come unto me. Indeed, this is a characteristic, was a characteristic word of our Lord.

It is a welcoming word. A word that speaks of a caring and concerned attitude. It is like the invitation that Moses gave to Horebub.

Come thou with us, and we will do thee good. For the Lord hath spoken well concerning Israel. You remember that when the disciples, when Philip went to find Nathaniel, and Nathaniel was a bit skeptical about the discovery that Philip claimed to have made.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The response of Philip was, come and see. And when the disciples, there were two disciples who followed Jesus, and he turned and asked them what they were about.

[9 : 38] They asked him, where do you dwell? He says, come and see. It's an invitation that overcomes to a certain extent. It's an invitation that is disarming of all objection.

An invitation that tells people to put the letter to the proof of personal experience. Come and see. As the psalmist has it, taste and see that the Lord is good.

And you notice here also that how well targeted this particular form of the invitation is. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.

It's an invitation to those who are burdened, to those who are cast down in spirit, to those who feel they don't know what to do, where to turn.

They've got problems that appear to be insoluble. They're up against it in life. There are others to whom I would have to take a different tack.

[10 : 49] People who feel quite competent, and that's the trouble with most, I think. that we feel with regard to the matter of our personal salvation, especially, that we can cope.

It may be difficult, but we think that in the end of the day we'll work out such a system, or we'll so direct our lives, that we'll achieve our own salvation.

many of us are like the people of whom our Lord spoke, who had been given an invitation to a supper prepared by a great king.

They felt very complimented by the fact that they had been invited. They felt, maybe, indeed some of them might well have felt that, well, that was the right thing to do.

They were worthy to be invited, and we would have been a bit insulted that they hadn't been invited. But when the time came for them to come and actually take what was on offer, when the invitation

went out to come, for all things are now ready, they all with one consent began to make excuse.
[12 : 05] It was, it wasn't convenient. It was cutting across their own plans. They hadn't entered in their diaries the particular time that this was to take place, and it wasn't at all convenient for them.

And the invitation proved to be not really targeted when it was addressed to them. But when it was given instead to those in the highways and hedges, in the lanes and byways of the cities, when the invitation was given to them, they came because they felt their need.

they felt there was something there that would do them good. They felt there was something there that would be in their interest to receive.

And this is how our Lord speaks here. All that labor and that have be laden, those who are cast down, come to me.

And you know, it's that very thought, that they are dressed to be on the laboring and heavy laden. And to all of them, that impresses me with the sense of the assured competence of Jesus.

[13 : 26] His assured competence and the boundlessness of his compassion. compassion. Because the people he is inviting to come to him are not the best of company.

They are not the kind of people that we want to meet very often in the course of a day's business. We find that if we meet one or two people who are down in the mouth, as we say, if we meet in the course of the day one or two who are really troubled, depressed, we ourselves get a bit depressed with them.

They start to unbidden themselves to us and we feel loaded down, we feel exhausted as we try to sustain their burden with them.

It's a common fact of experience. Ask yourself if you haven't behaved like this, maybe you have been out in the afternoon and you come home and you're asked when you get home, who did you meet?

Oh, who did I meet? Oh boy, who did I meet? And your wife or your husband can tell you haven't had the pleasantest of afternoons.

[14 : 50] Why do you tell him, you say, just half an hour with that person and I'm done for? That's the way we are. we can't sustain it all that much.

You ask ministers, you ask Christian counselors and they'll tell you how exceedingly exhausting they find it to cope with people who come to them with their burdens and want to offload their burdens onto them.

But Jesus says, come, not just one or two of you in the course of an afternoon I can cope with one or two of you. Not that, but come, every one of you, all of you who hear my invitation, come.

Don't be afraid, don't be reluctant, don't think I'm unwilling to meet you, don't think that I'm unable to help you. Here is the Lord who has penetration of understanding, accuracy of diagnosis in every particular case, who has the patience to listen, and that's a great thing, the patience to listen, and the wisdom to enlighten, who has in fact grace to help in the town of need.

It's a tribute to the divine competence, which is a tribute to the divine only competence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that he can take all who will come to him in our need and distress and real despair.

[16 : 37] And this is an invitation that's backed by promise and by instruction. come to me and I'll give you rest.

Take me and look upon you and dwell with me for I am meek and lonely in heart and you shall find rest to your souls. There's promise, promise of rest, rest for the weary heart.

rest. Now, what our Lord is offering here is inward peace and tranquility of mind. It's not the rest of inactivity.

Don't let anybody get the idea that what's being offered here is something like a holiday in the Bahamas or in the West Indies or somewhere where the sun is shining and the gates are not blowing.

that's not what's being offered here. It's the inward rest, the inward tranquility of mind. Someone has said that when there is a great storm at sea and the waves and the billows rage and roar, that some fathoms down, there is calm.

[18 : 03] And that what the people of God have is that tranquility that will be sustained where there be storm and stress and storm raging on the surface of things where there be that inner peace of mind that enables people to rest.

You know what it is if you're burdened by some worry. Something is bothering you. It's burning your mind from morning to night that's there with you when you're waking in the morning and it disables you.

If you're getting on with your work, you tell your friends, I can't really, I can hardly do a stroke because my mind is distracted.

My mind is distracted and so burdened with this and that. Maybe anxiety about someone, some loved one who's not well, who's seriously ill.

Then you get good news. You get the news that that person is well and you say, I can work now because my mind is at rest. Well, that's the kind of rest that our Lord is offering.

[19 : 23] it is the peace of mind, it is the inner tranquility of spirit that allows us to enter into the service of God. I will give you rest.

Take my look upon you and learn with me. The instruction that the Lord gives indicates to us in some measure what the nature of the underlying cause of so much of human distress.

It is due to our natural and horrible pride of heart. I am meek and lowly in heart and it's because he is meek and lowly in heart that he's able to sustain the burdens of those who yet have to learn the spirit of meekness and lowliness of heart.

God. How is it that we resent the world that accuses us as sinners before God? How is it that we feel a bit of annoyed at always being labelled as a sinner, a sinner before God?

It is that in the pride of our hearts we like to think of ourselves somewhat better. We like to think that we have a virtue, a measure of virtue, a measure of righteousness that should commend us to God.

[20 : 57] What our Lord wants is that we face reality and until we have received somewhat of the meekness and lowliness of the Savior himself we don't face reality.

we have to face the reality of God's supremacy and of God's righteousness and truth and justice and of our own unworthiness our own guilt in his presence and it is only as we cast ourselves upon the Lord at his bidding that we long that meekness and lowliness of heart only in partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ himself taking his yoke upon us only in partnership with him can we really face up to reality.

And so our Lord is telling us something about the transforming power the transfiguring power of the grace that he offers. Lowly me for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

It seems to me that what our Lord is telling us is we don't get the full rest of which he's speaking all at once. There is a certain measure of reassurance a certain stabilizing of our situation as we cast our burden upon him as we come at his invitation.

but there is also a learning process. We have to learn of him and the more that we learn of him the more we know the peace of God that passes all understanding the more we know the nature of the rest that remains to the people of God.

[22 : 58] The rest that makes us think of his yoke as easy and his burden as light. It doesn't appear so to the unconverted person to the person who doesn't know the grace of redemption in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It doesn't appear that the Christian way of life is an easy one one where the yoke is easy and the burden is light. The natural man has the idea that to be converted to Christ is well it's something akin to a tragedy because it means the end of pleasure it means the end of joy it means a lifetime from them on do this and don't do that and do this and do this the next thing life regimented life with get a face with a good hard mammal on it and never let it get cracked that's not the view that the man who comes to know the Lord he realizes what a fool I've been up to now what a misconception of the way of life in

Christ I have entertained his will his will his will his yoke is easy and his burden is light but it's only a yoke that's easy and a burden that's light when the heart has been achieved to the fellowship of Christ and so he loves him that anything that is born for his name is born gladly you see if you consult the experience of the apostle Paul you might say there was a life that was not easy there was a life that was burdened and difficult he himself will tell us it was a life in which he had turned his back on the prospects on great rosy prospects of promotion of places of honor among his own people it was a life in which he experienced much opposition persecution imprisonment stripes stripes from his own country receiving again and again flogging being in the arena being exposed to the danger of death itself we say that's not the kind of attraction if that's the kind of life you're inviting me to

I don't like the thought of it at all but Paul himself will say what things will gain to me those I counted loss for Christ this is the one thing I do forgetting the things that are behind reaching forward to the things that are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus Peter will tell you the same story he also endured much affliction in the cause and the in the fellowship and for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and he tells Christian people not to be put off he envisages for them a fiery trial he envisages times of great difficulty and yet and yet when it is all said and done and whatever difficulty and whatever pain and whatever distress that is involved what he's telling us is that it's all worthwhile when the heart is attuned to the fellowship of Christ it will make light of it for our light affliction as Paul himself puts it our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are unseen but the things which are seen are temporal but the things that are unseen are eternal and you remember the word quoted I think on the New Year's Day service by your minister about Boston and what he said about the covenant and what he had found in God's dealings with him there wasn't anything in it in the covenant that God had made with him that he would have wished taken out not anything omitted that he would have wished put in I'm not saying that you come to that all at once I found myself indeed when the minister said it I found myself in my mind and in my theology setting my amen to it but emotionally [28 : 20] I found it difficult and I think you may find it so sometimes because there is a learning process a learning process as we take the yoke of Christ upon us and learn of him take my yoke upon you and learn of me the thing is that to whatever our difficulty and whoever distressing the situation in which we are and whoever shock the pain that we feel we feel his hand upon our shoulder we feel his arm around us we know his presence we know his fellowship we know his love and that is what enables us to say his yoke is easy he bears he bears the burden we can let all the weight of it unto him my yoke is easy and my burden is light it's a learning process that may be difficult at times they are dangerous to be encountered for the sake of

Christ but with the heart at rest in the love of Christ we make light of them something like Jacob when he found he had to wait and work another seven years for his beloved Rachel and they seemed that a few days to him for the love that he bore to her so it is the love of Christ shed abroad in our heart that enables us to sustain whatever of burden whatever of distress or whatever of anguish of spirit it pleases God and his providence to bring to us because God because our hearts are at one with God because our hearts are at one with the Lord Jesus Christ then his way becomes more and more his way becomes a spontaneous choice we would not have it otherwise we would not have it other than how the Lord has appointed it it is when we are conscious of the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts where we can say his yoke is easy and his burden is light now there are people here and I'm going to ask if there are people here there are bound to be people here who are burdened who have distresses and agonies of spirit of which they can't speak to any other you can't even speak to your nearest and dearest about them you can't burden yourself to any

Christian person of experience to any minister or elder or any Christian whom you have great confidence the things so near so intimate that you can't express them to anybody else but you can express them I don't say that you can put them exactly into words but you can come before the Lord knowing that he reads your heart Lord here I am in my distress here I am with that awful burden that I I don't want to put into words it's so terrible in my own mind that I can't put it into words but you know the Lord knows come unto me he says just put into the proof it is a word of welcome a word of encouragement a word that speaks of the caring and compassionate disposition of our Lord listen to him believe him believe him that I see many thousands of people through the centuries have put him to the proof and there is not an exception among them who would say I came in my burden but he did nothing for me everyone who comes to him truly laying their burden upon him finds this surely they say he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows he is the one who had burdened himself with our distresses and grievances and anguish of soul come unto him look only to the Lord come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest let us pray we bless thee

O Lord for the infinite compassion which thou hast shown to us for those hands extended in mercy to us man pierced man pierced hands because he took our burden upon him the main burden of our sin and guilt he took to the very tree and made expiation for our guilt we pray that we may be received in Christ and that we may know in him the peace of God that passes all understanding for

his name's sake Amen