

Have you ever had one of those days—or weeks, or even months—where you feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders?

- Imagine a person at the beginning of their day. They've got their backpack on, but it's not just for a leisurely hike. It's packed with the usual: work deadlines pressing, financial worries weighing, family responsibilities stacked high, perhaps a challenging relationship, or even the subtle, nagging guilt of not feeling 'good enough' spiritually. Every new task that pops up, every unexpected problem, feels like another stone dropped into that already bursting pack.
- As the day wears on, their shoulders begin to slump. Their pace slows. Each step becomes an effort. They might smile on the outside, nod at colleagues, but inside, they're just *tired*. Exhausted. Overwhelmed. They might even find themselves wishing, just for a moment, that they could simply stop, drop everything, and just... rest. But the world doesn't stop, and those burdens demand to be carried.

Perhaps you know that feeling...

- That sense of being stretched too thin, carrying more than you feel capable of, feeling utterly heavy laden by the relentless demands of life.
- You're doing your best, but the weight just seems to increase.
- It's to people feeling exactly that kind of exhaustion, that kind of burden, that Jesus extends one of the most tender and transformative invitations in all of Scripture..."

Matthew 11:28-30 - Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁹ 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.³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

J C Ryle 19th Century Pastor and Author said of this passage, "There are few texts more striking than this in all the Bible—few that contain so wide and sweeping an invitation—few that hold out so full and comfortable a promise.

C.H. Spurgeon pointed out that in the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John...89 chapters of Biblical text, there is only one place Jesus tells us about his own heart.

- We learn much about his teachings, his birth, his ministry.
- We learn his manner of death – His resurrection and ascension
- "Consider the thousands of pages that have been written by theologians over the past 2,000 years of church history – Only one place do we hear the words from Jesus himself opens up to us his very heart...This is the one place in the Bible where the Son of God pulls back the veil and lets us peer way down into the core of who is... (Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, p. 17)

Title of the Message is: The Gracious Invitation

This passage is positioned between the doubt of John the Baptist, and the weight of man-made tradition.

- John, whom Jesus said of those born of women, there is none greater – forerunner of the Messiah, but perhaps it was the difficult situations of imprisonment, or because of unmet expectations, or John's limited perception that cause him to doubt.
- This is sandwiched in between the burdened...the weight of man-made religious tradition
- It was just a few verse earlier where Jesus saw the crowds as sheep, weak and scattered as sheep having no shepherd.

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I want you to see several things from this passage of Scripture that I believe will encourage you

Jesus Warm Welcome - Compassionate Character, and His Profound Promise

Jesus' Warm Welcome

Notice what Jesus does not say...

- "Pull yourself together." You weakling!
- "Get over it!" "Don't be so over dramatic!" "We've been through this before."

No! Notice what He says, **Matthew 11:28**

Matthew 11:28 - Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,

Who is giving the Invitation – Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God

- He is the High and Holy one - He is the image of the invisible God – Col. 1
- Heb 1:1-3 – The writer of Hebrews said of Jesus... "³**who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,**
- He is the one extending this gracious invitation
- We know the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the World

To Whom is the Invitation given

Matthew 11:28 - Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,

Verse 28 of our passage in Matthew 11 tells us explicitly who qualifies for fellowship with Jesus: "all who labor and are heavy laden."

- You don't need to unburden or collect yourself and then come to Jesus.
- Your very burden is what qualifies you to come.
- You don't need to have it all together –
- Jesus is not looking for the polished
- You cannot come to him unless you first humble yourself and realized without him you are nothing

All who Labor –

- To physically become worn out, weary or faint.
- In the context – exhausted from trying to please God by following all the rules.

All who are heavy laden

- means "loaded up," "burdened," or "overburdened."

- **MacArthur** adds that in the passive voice the idea is "that at some time in the past a great load was dumped on the wearied person." He goes to explains that while "**weary** refers to the internal exhaustion caused by seeking divine truth through human wisdom, **heavy-laden** suggests the external burdens caused by the futile efforts of works righteousness."
- Jesus invites the person who is wearied from his vain search for truth through human wisdom, who is exhausted from trying to earn salvation, and who has despaired of achieving God's standard of righteousness by his own efforts.
- **Spurgeon**....expounds on the meaning of weary..."all ye that labor," in whatever form. In the service of formal religion, in the attempt to keep the law, or in any other way of self-justification. In the service of self to get gain, honor, ease, etc. In the service of the world to discover, invent, legislate, etc. In the service of Satan, lust, drink, infidelity, etc.

The warm welcome is not for everyone – "... all **who**...labor and are heavy laden,

- In the paragraph right before these verses Jesus gives a picture of the proud, arrogant – Woe to you Choriazin, Woe to you, Bethsaida – It will be more tolerable for Sodom on the day of judgement than for you, because you did not repent.
- Later Jesus pronounces woe upon the Religious Leaders because of pride
- Some of you...Come in this room, you look like you've got it all together – You work hard ... dare not show any kinks in the armor – no weakness...

James 4:6 - But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

Jesus' Compassionate Character

Matthew 11:28-30 - Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

There is a promise given...I will give you rest, but we'll come back to that thought...

The Greek word translated **gentle** is also used to mean "humble / meek"

- In other words, Jesus is not trigger-happy. Not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated.
- Meek/Gentle is the idea of strength under control.

He is **lowly (also translated humble, or of low estate)**

- This does not necessarily refer to humility as a virtue but to humility in the **sense of destitution** or being thrust **downward by life circumstances**
- Paul uses the word when he tells us to "not be haughty, but associate with the lowly" Rom. 12:16
- Dane Orlund wrote in *Gentle and Lowly*, "The point in saying that Jesus is lowly is that he is accessible. For all his resplendent glory and dazzling holiness, his supreme uniqueness and

otherness, **no one in human history has ever been more approachable than Jesus Christ.**

No prerequisites. No hoops to jump through. (Ortlund, Dane. *Gentle and Lowly*, p. 20).

- Orlund goes on to say, "...for the penitent, his heart of gentle embrace **is never outmatched by our sins and foibles and insecurities and doubts and anxieties and failures**. For lowly gentleness is not one way Jesus occasionally acts toward others. Gentleness is who he is. It is his heart. He can't un-gentle himself toward his own any more than you or I can change our eye color. It's who we are." (Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, p. 21-22)

This is not how we usually think of Jesus.

- Reflecting on Matthew 11, the old English pastor Thomas Goodwin said we often misunderstand Christ. We assume that because He is holy, He must be harsh toward sinners. But Jesus corrects that thinking when He says, "I am meek"—gentleness is His very nature.
- We tend to project our own instincts onto Him. In our world, people with power often look down on the weak, and those who seem superior keep their distance from those they see as unworthy. So we imagine Jesus coming near to us reluctantly, as if He is disgusted.
- But the Bible shows us something very different. This exalted Christ—glorious, powerful, and beyond description—is at His core gentle and lowly in heart. He does not shrink back from sinners or sufferers; He delights to draw near. What we assume about God by instinct is often wrong. Scripture reveals a Savior whose greatness is matched by His gentleness.
- This is who He is. Jesus Himself said: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Let me illustrate it this way...A little child once saw a muddy puppy stuck in a ditch.

- Without hesitation, the child climbed down, picked it up, and held it close—even though it was filthy. An adult watching might cringe and say, "Don't touch that—you'll get dirty." But the child didn't care. Compassion overruled caution.
- Many of us imagine Jesus the way that cautious adult reacts to mud—reluctant to get close to messy people. We assume that because He is holy, He must keep His distance from sinners. But Jesus says the opposite about Himself: "*I am gentle and lowly in heart.*"
- The glory of Christ does not make Him withdraw from the broken—it draws Him toward them. His greatness is not threatened by our weakness; it is revealed in His willingness to come near.
- We think He'll recoil. He says, "Come to Me."

Over and over again we see this throughout the Gospel – Jesus was moved with compassion

Matthew 4:23 - And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Matthew 9:35-38³⁶ But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

- Healing the sick, feeding the hungry, wiping away the tears of the bereaved

- Touching the lepers, Giving sight to the blind

When we take the Gospels as a whole and consider the composite picture given to us of who Jesus is, what stands out most strongly?

- Yes, he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes and longings (Matt. 5:17).
- Yes, he is one whose holiness causes even his friends to fall down in fear, aware of their sinfulness (Luke 5:8).
- Yes, he is a mighty teacher, one whose authority outstripped even that of the religious PhDs of the day (Mark 1:22).
- To diminish any of these is to step outside of vital historic orthodoxy. But the dominant note left ringing in our ears after reading the Gospels, the most vivid and arresting element of the portrait, is the way the Holy Son of God moves toward, touches, heals, embraces, and forgives those who least deserve it yet truly desire it. (Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, p. 27)

Jesus' Profound Promise

Matthew 11:28-30 - Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and ***I will give you rest.***²⁹ 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.***³⁰ For My yoke is ***easy*** and My burden is ***light.***"

When Jesus said, "***I will give you rest... You will find rest of your souls...***"

- He's talking about something much deeper than just taking a nap or a vacation.
- Think of "your soul" as the very core of who you are – your mind, your emotions, your spirit, your deepest self.
- So, "rest for your souls" means:
 - **Deep, Inner Peace:** It's an **inner calm** that settles your anxieties and quietens your worries, even when life around you is chaotic. It's peace *with* God and peace *from* God that fills your heart.
 - **Clear Purpose:** It's finding a **sense of meaning and direction** for your life that doesn't exhaust you. When you rest in Jesus, you stop striving to find your purpose and instead discover it *in Him*, leading to a life that feels centered and truly significant.
 - **Freedom from Burden:** It's the opposite of being "heavy laden." It's liberation from guilt, the pressure to perform, and the constant striving that wears us out.
- In short, "rest for your souls" is **true inner peace and a God-given purpose** that comes when you fully trust Jesus with your entire being. It's a deep, spiritual refreshment that makes life make sense.

Come to Jesus – Take His Yoke: He takes the load

- We give all we have to Jesus
 - In this passage Jesus uses the image of a **yoke—a heavy wooden beam** placed over an ox's neck so it can pull a plow or cart. Sometimes a yoke held two oxen together. Often

one was stronger and more experienced. That stronger ox knew the master's commands and helped guide the weaker one.

- Jesus is saying that when we come to Him, it's like being yoked together with Him. We're the weaker one. He's the strong one. As we walk with Him, He carries the weight and teaches us how to follow the Father's will.
- His yoke is not heavy because He shares the load. It's light because we're not pulling alone.
- We give Him the full weight of all our sin (failed time / time again)
- We give him our complete and utter inability to obey God
- Jesus gives all He has to us.
 - Remember, he is the stronger One, the One who alone is able to bear the weight of the Father's commands. This is the one who invites us into the yoke with Him.
- **We give Him the full weight of all our sins, and He gives us full pardon for all our sins.**
 - We are counted righteous in Christ because He has obeyed the very law we could not obey. Therefore, when we come to Him, we rest with peace before God. Jesus says in verse 29 that we will find rest in Him, or in other words, "relief from bearing the load." Praise God that in Christ we are free from self-effort, self-improvement, and a constant struggle to overcome the guilt and shame of our sin. (Platt, *Exalting Jesus*: Mt. KL 2891)
- He gives us the complete ability to obey God.

Action: Next Steps Come...Take...Learn

"We have seen from this passage Jesus extend the most tender and profound invitation in human history. He sees our **weary world** – those of us carrying the crushing weight of deadlines, disappointments, the demands of family, or the relentless striving that leaves us feeling **heavy laden**, perhaps even "crushed beyond measure" like Paul.

But Jesus, the one who **humbled Himself** from eternity to a cross, is not harsh. He is **gentle and lowly in heart**. He doesn't add to our burdens; He offers to exchange them. He offers **profound peace provided** and the discovery of **divine purpose**.

So, what is our response to this incredible invitation today?

1. Come to Him, Cast Your Burdens:

- Think about that metaphorical backpack we talked about at the beginning. What are the specific weights, the particular burdens, you are carrying right now? Is it anxiety about the future? Guilt from the past? The pressure to perform? Unforgiveness?
- Jesus says, "Come to Me." Not to a program, not to a perfect set of rules, but to Him personally. Today, in this moment, you can consciously, spiritually, cast those burdens onto Him. Imagine literally unburdening yourself, handing over the heavy load to the One who is strong enough and gentle enough to carry it. Don't carry what He died to carry for you.
- **I Peter 5:7** - casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

2. Take His Yoke, Learn His Way of Peace and Purpose:

- His yoke isn't a burden; it's a partnership. It's a commitment to living life *His way*, in His strength, under His **gentle guidance**.
- **Learn – same word that is translated “make disciples” Matthew 28:19**
 - Jesus is essentially saying, “Learn what it means to be My disciple, and you will find rest for your souls.
 - Jesus alone knows the Father, reveals the Father, and perfectly obeys the Father; therefore when we come into the yoke with Him, He leads us in terms of how to walk with the Father. He enables us to do what we could never do on our own.
 - And when we are in the yoke with Christ, we work in peace with God. In other words, we obey God, not by our own strength, but with the very strength of Christ.
 - In everything we do, it is Christ who is leading us, guiding us, enabling us, teaching us—literally living through us.
- Just as He was gently and lowly, we are to be just like him
 - **Philippians 2:5-8** - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.
 - **Romans 13:14** - But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its lusts*.
 - As you learn from Him, you will discover that His way leads to genuine **peace** in your heart and a clear sense of **purpose** for your life, even amidst chaos.

3. Rest in Goodness and Grace:

- Remember, Jesus is not a taskmaster. He knows your frame, He remembers you are dust. His **lowliness and gentleness** mean He meets you right where you are, with compassion and understanding. You don't have to clean yourself up to come to Him, you just have to come.
- Rest in the truth that He understands your weakness, and His strength is made perfect in it. Allow His peace to permeate your soul, trusting that the One who humbled Himself for you will faithfully lead you into His perfect plan.

Conclusion: Invitation to the Sinner and the Saint

- Don't yet know Christ –
 - Know you are a sinner – Trust in his finished work on the cross
 - Repent of Sin and call upon his name for salvation.
- What are you waiting for?

For those of you who know the Lord...Maybe you walked away – Maybe it's been a while

- Come to Him – Give Him your Load, Burden, your cares
- He's the only place you will find rest for your souls