

Jesus for the Rest of Us

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Matthew 11:25-30

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Well, good morning. I don't often get the opportunity to be out in the congregation singing with you. And I will just tell you, it blesses my heart to hear the people of God singing together. I think about the saints and the angels that right now are worshiping before the throne and millions of Christians worldwide who are taking time aside to worship our king. And so I just want to say I love that. I love that, and I hope you love that opportunity that we have.

Today, we're going to be studying in the book of Matthew, chapter 11. So if you would begin turning in your Bibles or your phones to Matthew 11, and we're going to be looking at verses 25 through 30 today. And this is one of the most famous statements of Jesus' life and ministry. And so I know many a sermon has been preached on this passage before. But this passage for me has played a role in my own spiritual journey lately.

And so it's from that experience that I'll be coming today. My brother about two years ago recommended a book to me called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer. And I did what any good younger brother would do in that scenario. I totally blew him off. I said, "Man, whatever. You like that book." Fast forward then, though, to this summer, and God brought that book back into my life.

And as I began to read it, or Matt, I confess, listen to it because I love audiobooks, the Lord used the passage that we're going to be looking at today to begin a change in my own heart. And so it's from those experiences that I come to you today. Tired and busy. These are two of the most common words that I have used in my own conversations and that I hear from other people.

"Hey, how are you doing today?" "Good, just busy. How are you? Great. Just tired. We're so tired. We're so busy. People are exhausted. Can I get an amen? You might come this morning exhausted. We're running at the frantic pace of modern life. My wife and I understand this. We have five young children, ages 7, 6, 5, 2, 1.

There is never a dull moment. She and I are by nature very passionate people, very invested people, and so we work hard at everything we do. We give our full effort. And so we have used these responses many times. But if I'm honest, this has gone deeper than just a sense of physical exhaustion in my life. I began to sense a deeper, inner, soul-level exhaustion.

I began to ask myself questions like, "Do I like the person I'm becoming? Does my current life trajectory and pace feel sustainable? Do I function with energy and joy or exhaustion and frustration? How do I respond to interruptions in my life or inconveniences?" And if people looked at my time apart from Sundays and my energy and my money and my commitments, what would they say is most important to me in my life?

And as a pastor, I will confess there are even dark moments in my mind when I feel like more of a salesman than someone who actually uses the product I claim to love. There's got to be something more. I feel like I'm missing the secret sauce to faith. And today in our passage in Matthew 11, Jesus is going to be answering these very questions of my heart.

Before we do that, though, I'd like to pray. Father, as we come to Your Word, I just pray that today no one would leave here remembering me or hearing from me. That God, the very words of life, would be spoken by

Your Spirit to their souls. And Lord, for those who are exhausted, I pray that they would exit this service today feeling hopeful.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. A little background to the passage that we're going to begin reading in verse 25. Just before this, Jesus has finished rebuking three towns, the towns of Corazin and Betsaida and Capernaum. And Jesus is rebuking these towns for their lack of belief. Around the vicinity of these three towns, Jesus has done miracles already in his ministry.

And yet these people had refused to believe in him. And so it's right after Jesus' rebuke that we begin reading today in verse 25. So would you read with me? "At that time, Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do." You see, these three towns had missed what was so obvious right before them that God in the flesh, Jesus, was standing in their presence. He was doing things that none of us, humanly speaking, could have accomplished miraculous things.

And yet, due to the hardness of their heart, these three towns had missed it because the truth is that the wisdom of this life blinds us to the truth of God. God was revealing Himself to them. They just weren't looking with eyes to see it. Later on in the book of Matthew, Jesus would say, "Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Later on, the apostle Paul would write, "Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness.

And again, the Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile. The truth of God is visible to those who can come humbly and receive like a child. Jesus is saying there's a simplicity and a trust and an innocence that's necessary to see the truth of who God is. To you and I today, these three towns, they look silly.

You're just like, "How could they be so dense not to see that Jesus was with them?" And yet, we know that the truth of God looks foolish to those around us today. We live in a post-Christian nation. I know that is difficult to hear, but the truth of the gospel is not the prevailing thought of our nation anymore.

Christians are becoming the laughing stock of our culture to believe God on things like marriage and creation and forgiveness and humility and service. It looks like foolishness to the wisdom of this age. We must come humbly and vulnerably to see God for who he is. Let's continue reading in verse 27, "All things have been committed to me by my Father.

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him." The first thing I noticed that Jesus is stating, "I have all authority." Jesus is not some lesser version of God. We believe that Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father on our behalf that He might die for our sins, but He is still the fullness of God.

There is no deficiency in Christ. There's no place outside of His scope and His care. And then Jesus is saying, "I have all access." Jesus has perfect intimacy with God the Father. There's an unrestrained oneness between God the Father and God the Son. And then we see that Jesus is the one who reveals the Father to others.

Just as Jesus has oneness with the Father, so He holds the ability to share that oneness with others. In John, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him, and you have seen Him." Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us.

To know Jesus Christ is to know God the Father. And Jesus continues on in verse 28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Jesus begins this line with an invitation. I just want us not to miss the beauty of this invitation. Remember, Jesus has just stated that He is the only way to know God.

And that if you know Jesus, you know God the Father. And then right after that, He opens up an invitation, "Come to me. Come to me." What a beautiful thing to hear the invitation of the one who has authority over all things and perfect intimacy with the Father. Say, "Come, come to me." But I notice that there is an implied condition to his invitation.

It says, "Come, all you who are weary and burdened." He invites those who can admit that what they've got going is unsustainable. There's an honesty and a humility in admitting that you're at the end of your rope. This makes sense with what Jesus has just said about coming in humility like a child because the hope of the great physician is for those who can admit the illness of their souls.

And then Jesus makes a bold promise. He promises rest, not, "Hey, maybe you'll find rest if you come to me. You might find rest if you come to me. I will give you rest." This invitation is sealed with a promise. And so then I ask the question, "What am I missing?" I'm a Christian. I've come to Jesus.

I've admitted I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sin. I believe that He rose again. I've put my faith in Him, but I'm still soul level exhausted. And I think this is where we often cut this passage short. We interpret this passage in the context of a conversion experience. And please don't get me wrong. Jesus is inviting people to come and experience a moment of faith.

And yet, for many of us who have made that decision, we find ourselves missing out on the fulfillment of His promised for rest. Jesus is going to continue and give us the answer to that very question.

Let's read in verse 29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." You see, Jesus was a first-century rabbi, a teacher, and he was inviting people to come and to apprentice under him, to follow him, and to those who accepted that invitation, they were called his disciples.

And this term that Jesus uses about a yoke, this is originally a farming term. A yoke was a wooden bar that was placed to connect two oxen together at the neck to pull a plow. And it would keep the oxen in step with one another and also shoulder the weight between them. But in the first century, this was no longer just an agricultural term. This was a term for a rabbi or a teacher's set of rules and expectations.

This is like the course syllabus. If you were going to train under someone, it was how they interpreted the law of God through the books of Moses. And when you apprentice under them, you were tethering yourself to their every move. You wanted to learn about their teaching and their lifestyle and their interactions. And the truth is, even 2,000 years later, we all still carry a yoke because we are all still learning a way to handle life from someone or something.

For the first century Jews, the religious leaders were the ones who had been teaching them, and their yoke was heavy, an endless list of rules, rules that led to self-righteousness and pride and a shiny exterior that looked spiritual but devoid of intimacy with God in their hearts. And ultimately, these people were exhausted. Absolutely exhausted under that yoke.

I see the same thing at work in churches like ours today or across the country. People with endless lists of rules, self-righteous and condescending to those around them, full of legalism that makes a very nice, shiny exterior when there's heart decay inside. Or maybe it's the yoke of our own desires, the me culture we live in.

I decide what's right and wrong, and life is all about freedom, freedom for me to pursue my life desires. And yet, as many of us have found, desire is never satisfied. It is a bottomless pit, an endless cycle of more, more,

jumping from the next to the next to the next. And people are as depressed and as exhausted as ever in a nation of freedom.

And Jesus is saying, "My presence, my teachings, my expectations are life-giving." I'm not a cruel teacher like you've experienced before. I'm gentle and I'm humble. I lead by example. And so when you hit yourself to me, it's actually going to bring freedom in your life. But you might ask, why would Jesus then use a term for work or rules or expectations for people who are weary and burdened?

Listen to this quote from Frederick Dale Bruner. "A yoke is a work instrument. Thus, when Jesus offers a yoke, he offers what we might think tired workers need least. They need a mattress or a vacation, not a yoke." But Jesus realizes that the most beautiful, restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life, a fresh way to bear responsibilities.

Realism sees that life is a succession of burdens. We cannot get away from them. Thus, instead of offering escape, Jesus offers equipment. Jesus means that obedience to His Sermon on the Mount or His yoke will develop in us a balance and a way of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living. Truth is, the life of a Christian is hard.

Jesus promised later in Matthew when he said, "If anyone wants to come to me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Basically, an invitation for us to join Jesus in His suffering and His death. Life is hard for the believer. And yet, Jesus followed that up with, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Life is found in surrender to Jesus.

It's truly the bargain of a lifetime. I hope you believe that. To lose your life to follow Jesus is to find the good life, the restful life, and to follow Jesus in his death is an invitation and a doorway to join him in his life. And that invitation starts now, not just in eternity in heaven.

We read then in verse 30, "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." I love how St. Augustine reworded this verse right here. He said, "Any other burden oppresses or crushes you, but Christ actually takes weight off you. Any other burden weighs you down, but Christ gives you wings. If you take a bird's wings away, you might seem to be taking weight off it.

But the more weight you take off, the more you tie it down to the earth. There it is on the ground, and you wanted to relieve it of a weight. Give it back the weight of its wings, and you will see how it flies. The very things that seem to be greatest losses in the eyes of the wisdom of this world are actually life to disciples of Jesus. Being a Christian is not just saying a prayer, confessing our sin and believing in Jesus.

That's great, but it's just the starting gate. Being a Christian is about being a lifelong disciple under Jesus, tethering yourself to Jesus, being His apprentice in everything. All of us would say that we want the restful life, the good life that Jesus refers to in this passage.

But maybe if you're honest this morning, you would say, "That is just not my faith experience to this point in my life." For me, this disconnect became very clear this summer. I realized I want the benefits of being a disciple of Jesus while ordering my life around being a disciple of the American dream. I want to believe in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life.

But if you examine deep down into my heart, often my treasure has been found in the things of this life. And God has been calling me back to a place of surrender and true discipleship. I love how Pastor John Mark Comer summarizes what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It's simply to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus did.

So I had to begin to start asking myself some really hard questions about these three points. How much time or desire do I invest in being with Jesus? This should be the most central desire of a disciple of Jesus. Jesus did

not die so we could merely go to heaven one day. I want you to think back to creation. God created Adam and Eve.

They were in the garden, and it says that God walked with them in the garden. And though they loved one another and they enjoyed their work, the beauty of Eden was intimacy with God. Now we know that sin broke that perfect intimacy. And as Adam and Eve stepped out in disobedience, that relationship with God was broken. And as a result, death and pain and despair entered the scene.

And you and I see that at work every day in our lives and in our nation. We see violence and envy and sexual immorality and depression and anxiety and greed, you name it. Sin is on display. Brokenness is on display because broken relationship with God has brought brokenness into every other relationship we have. It is distorted how we relate with ourselves.

It's broken how we relate with one another. It's broken how we relate to creation itself. And even creation is under the bondage of sin because of this broken relationship. And as we look through the Bible, we see that all throughout history, God has been on a calculated and relentless journey of love to restore that intimacy with His creation. And finally, in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God paid the final price for sin.

And that pathway back to intimacy was paved for good. So put very simply, Jesus died that we might have relationship with God. And he offers that relationship in this life and then perfectly in heaven for eternity. And so heaven, we get this wrong many times. Heaven is not a place for the American dream on steroids, primarily.

The main joy of heaven will be perfect intimacy with our Creator. And yet, I have often found myself preaching the good news of what Jesus has done to offer people the hope of heaven all the while living with little to no desire to spend time with Jesus. Do you see the disconnect?

Do I value being with Jesus? Because it's out of that place of intimacy that Jesus begins to change us into His image. He begins to speak into our lives, and we begin to learn what it means to be satisfied in Him as with the richest of foods. Instead of endlessly going after the cravings of our flesh, we learn to willingly submit to Him even when our bodies say no or our culture pushes back.

And then finally, out of that transformation, we begin to do what Jesus did. We begin to love our neighbors. We begin to serve others and be a people of forgiveness and grace and hope with one another. We go after lost people with the gospel, with abandon. So then this morning, the real question is, how do we organize our lives around being a disciple of Jesus?

How do I make my life focused on being with Jesus and becoming like Jesus and doing what Jesus did? This journey of intimacy and transformation and outpouring is fostered through what we have traditionally called spiritual disciplines. Things like prayer, Bible study, fasting, solitude, simplicity, service, rest, confession, worship. This is not an exhaustive list.

And if you're anything like me this morning, as soon as I just put these up, you probably groaned inside. Oh. Disciplines, that's the key to rest. Other term that might not be so rough on us like discipline could be spiritual rhythms or spiritual formation.

But at their core, they are the model that Jesus laid out for us in His life and ministry, equipment to be able to live restful in a culture of difficulty. And I want you to remember that this list, more than anything, is all about an invitation to intimacy with Jesus. There are a framework through which the life of the Spirit can blossom in our lives, an invitation to the good life, the restful life.

Now, all of this may seem a little overwhelming this morning. You might say, "How am I going to spend more time with Jesus when my schedule is already smashed? How am I going to have the energy to do disciplines when I am already at the point of breaking in my life?"

How do I do more things for Jesus when I'm drowning?" And this is where the hurry of our modern culture has been a master plan from the pit of hell to keep followers of Jesus from living in the rest that He has promised us. I'm reminded of the parable of the sower.

And Jesus said in that, "The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the Word, making it unfruitful." I ask us, Fairview Missionary Church, myself included, has the deceitfulness of wealth and the worries of this life robbed us from being a fruitful church, robbed us from the rest of discipleship in Jesus?

Could it be that we are living unfruitful, restless lives because of this same problem? I know this has been true in my own life. And spiritual disciplines are the way that God begins to till the soil of our heart so that then we can become fruitful again in intimacy with our Savior. Because to follow Jesus in discipleship requires a change in our priorities and our pace of life.

I want to give you an example from my own life of how God has really exposed me in this area. Please don't stone me as I say this. I have traditionally not found much joy reading God's Word privately. It's not something I've looked forward to. And I would often excuse this by saying, I'm not really a reader. I told you I'm an audiobook guy.

You know I'm a musician. I engage in different ways. What God has exposed in my heart is that I'm honestly just exhausted by the time I get to those spaces. Whether it's early in the morning or late at night, I'm exhausted. And so I just want something to numb my mind. And I'm embarrassed to say that that exhaustion has often come from things like Netflix and caffeine and football. Sad day yesterday.

Go Irish next year. But by the time I would want to invest time being intimate with Jesus, I was fried. Mentally and physically fried. And so God has been in this process of tilling the soil of my heart through spiritual disciplines, that I might be fruitful again, that I might enjoy the rest that has been afforded and promised to me.

So this morning, I ask you, what step is the Holy Spirit calling you to take this week to reorganize your life around being a disciple of Jesus? I want to encourage you to start simple. Don't make some magical, unattainable list that you're like, "Oh, I know I should be that." Start right where you're at.

Jesus told us he's gentle. He's humble. He walks with us. But as you ponder that question today, I want to leave you with three final thoughts. The first is this. Remember that discipleship at its core is an invitation to relationship. It's all about intimacy with Jesus. A love relationship with our Savior that brings about a process of transformation in our lives and that leads us to joyfully outpour from that place of infilling from the Spirit.

And spiritual disciplines are about creating the physical and emotional and spiritual space for that to take place. Second, I would encourage each of us to honestly evaluate what we give our time and energy to each day. If we all pulled out our iPhones and you clicked on screen time, what would you see?

How many hours a day do you invest in watching TV or streaming platforms? How much of your time is consumed by hobbies and sports? None of these things are bad in and of themselves, please. Don't mishear me. But can we be honest about what really matters to us? What do these things really say about who I am a disciple of?

And then thirdly, we must all answer this question, do I trust my Savior's voice? Do I trust that true rest is found in a life of discipleship to Jesus? It really is a matter of trust. And so I asked you this morning, are you exhausted from life?

Are you exhausted from religion? Are you exhausted from church? Jesus is inviting you to find rest today. I'm going to close our time by reading verses 28 through 30 again. And this time I'll be reading from the message translation. And I just want to invite us right now if you would close your eyes and bow your heads.

And as I read these verses, I want you to hear them not as the voice of Sam coming from the stage, but as the voice of your Savior. The great I am who is as present today as he was 2,000 years ago speaking these to first-century listeners. Are you tired, worn out, burned out on religion?

Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

So Jesus, the great I am, I thank You that You are present with us by Your Spirit today. And that these words carry just as much weight, just as much invitation, and just as much power as they ever have. And God, I know how You have convicted me and humbled me in this category personally.

And so I just pray today that for the one who feels exhausted, God, that you would wrap your arms around them today. Lord, and you would walk with them and teach them how to find their wings again in a place of true discipleship. And God, I pray that Fairview would not be a church that is fruitless because of the deceitfulness of wealth and the worries of this life.

But that you would till the soil of our heart, Lord, that we might be fruitful again. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.