

This is the day the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice that the feedback is over.

Actually, the scripture says, let us rejoice and be glad in him, but I'm kind of glad the feedback was taken care of as well.

It is such a joy and a privilege to be here this morning and to worship with you here at All Avenue Baptist Church.

Again, it is a privilege.

I've had the joy of being in the Kansas City area almost 2 1/2 decades.

My wife Julie is with me today and I've also been working with a guiding documents committee of the church and that has been going so well.

What a joy and privilege it is to be here again and to serve the Lord.

An English as second language instructor was using a well-proven approach to appropriate a language.

And that is that when you learn a new word in a second language, you want to try to use that word 10 times in the day that you learn it.

When I was in Pueblo Mexico doing language school, that was one of the challenges that we were given by our professor.

But in this particular narrative I'm sharing, she was telling the class again, If you use a word ten times, it will be yours for life.

If you use a word ten times, it will be yours for life.

And from the back of the room came a small voice, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda.

You know, when you think about it, if something

could be yours for life if you said it 10 times, what would you say?

Would it be a boyfriend or a girlfriend or a spouse?

Would it be money, money, money?

Would that be your mantra?

Would it be fame?

You know, think about what would you ask for if it could be yours for life if you just simply said it 10 times?

But then ask this, would that really bring

joy?

Would it bring happiness?

Would it bring contentment?

You see, the annals of history are filled with billionaires who have lived and died without hope.

And we are now living in a generation that will see the first trillionaire living and dying.

And without Christ, he will also not have hope.

From J.

Paul Getty, Howard Hughes, William Randolph Hearst, more recently people like Michael Jackson who they say was the most popular performer ever.

Athletes, kings, generals, engineers, celebrities, socialites.

So many have lived and died chasing hope yet living in despair.

Yesterday, I decided to do a review of the major news outlets.

So I went to CNN, CBS, ABC, NBC, BBC, Reuters, and a couple of others.

And I was just trying to do an assessment.

How much of the news is positive?

And the reality is 70% is actually negative.

70% of the news was negative.

And what's interesting is in some of those headlines, things that growing up, so think back 50 plus years, growing up would have been applauded and celebrated today are demonized.

Such as throwing a baseball over 100 miles an hour.

Yeah, they're saying it should almost be criminal to do that.

Growing up, man, if you could hit 96, you were like a rock star.

What a change we have seen today.

You see, the challenge that we have is that oftentimes we put our worth and our hope in what we do.

And Dwight Moody, DL Moody had it right.

He said, you know, the big problem is not what you do, but what you are.

And let me just say by introduction that he understood what we are is sinners.

We are sinners by nature and by choice.

You don't have to teach someone how to sin.

None of us get up in the morning and teach our children or grandchildren how to lie or cheat or steal.

But guess what?

Do they lie?

Do they cheat?

Do they do things that are not pleasing or disobedient?

Yes, they do because we're sinners by nature and by choice.

But we can overcome the despair that comes through that lifestyle and we can enjoy what God has intended for us, which is a wholeness and a life in Him.

So what do we do along the journey?

Along this journey of the Christian life where we find ourselves kind of

attracted by the flesh or chasing something like money, money, money, money, or fame, fame, fame, or celebrity, or just even comfort, what do we do?

How do we rediscover God's truth that leads to hope?

That's what we're going to look at today.

As we go to Matthew 11, so if you have your Bibles, please go ahead and feel free to put your finger in Matthew 11.

And we're going to be unpacking some verses towards the end of chapter 11.

And while you're turning to there, let me pray.

Father, this morning I pray that You would help us to discover the nature of lasting hope through the instructions that You have given us.

Lord, bring about a faithful response on our behalf as we read Your Word and by Your grace apply Your truths

to our lives for Your glory and for our good.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen.

Matthew chapter 11, starting with verse 28, I'll read to the end of the chapter, probably a very familiar passage to some of you.

Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

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, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

May God bless the reading of His Word.

Well, here's kind of a reality.

My observations have been that many, not all, but many, many Christians kind of go about their routines with about the same joy and contentment as someone who just hit their thumb with a hammer, meaning there is a lot of Christians that, unless...

Somehow or another, you were able to peel open their heart just looking on the outside.

You wouldn't realize that they have the hope and joy of someone who has God's free gift of eternal salvation and the hope and promise of eternal life with Him where there will be complete satisfaction.

No more tears, no more suffering, no more being sick, overweight, tired, weary, none of that.

No more death.

Wow.

I mean, that right there should get us excited this morning.

But a lot of Christians, well, they don't live in that excitement because I can share with you, and you know this, the enemy doesn't play fair.

The enemy, the devil, wants you to be kind of miserable.

He wants you to focus on the Debbie Downer side of life and not to be just picking on the ladies.

We'll also call it the Frank the Frowner, okay, so both genders are in there.

But here is the reality.

When we were called to be disciples, Christ gave us guidelines.

He gave us marching orders that would allow us to live a life that is able to overcome even the challenges.

Not that the challenges won't come.

Oh, they will come.

But rather, we will be victorious through Christ.

So we're going to unpack this passage a little bit today, and it's up there on the screen.

First of all, we're going to be looking at it from the lens of three questions.

The first question is going to be, who is the passage addressed to?

Who is Jesus speaking to in this passage?

He is speaking, first of all, to those who labor, okay?

Now that word labor,

If you memorize this in the King James, come to me, you who are weary.

And that's exactly what it means.

It means that you are fatigued, worn out.

You're maybe overcome with grief.

The word literally means you are exhausted, meaning you have expended the energy both physically, emotionally or spiritually.

It could be any one of those three.

from the toils that you are going through.

So the passage is addressed to those who are exhausted.

They're worn out, they're tired, they're weary, they feel like they've labored and they have nothing else to give.

By the way, with this heat lately, I've kind of felt like that by about 2 o'clock in the afternoon most days.

So it's addressed to those who labor.

And then it's also addressed to those who are

Secondly, heavy laden.

Now, this word heavy laden means to be overloaded or overburdened, but it was likely a word used in the New Testament times as a way of describing, for example, a cart that was stuck in the mud.

Now, has anybody ever been stuck in sand, mud, or something like that with a vehicle?

Right, and you know that the right answer is you just give it more power, right?

Yeah, and what happens when you do that?

You just get deeper and deeper.

That, that is the essence of this word heavy laden.

It's like you're expending all this energy and you're going nowhere.

It's like you need to be over in Overland Park and you've been walking all day only to find that you're on a treadmill.

You're not making any progress, but boy, you're sure tired.

Jesus is speaking to those who are weary or those who labor and those who are heavy laden.

Now, here's an important fact about this passage, about Matthew 11.

What we have just read in verses 28 through 30 is sandwiched between two attitudes that cause the people in Jesus' time to be exhausted and weary

and heavy laden.

The first was modeled in disbelief because right before this, what we read about is John the Baptist.

John the Baptist, who we love and we appreciate and what a great forerunner of Jesus Christ, kind of the last Old Testament, first New Testament prophet there.

But John the Baptist is having a bad day.

Have you ever had a bad day?

I hope you're saying yes because that's who's weary and heavy laden.

And John the Baptist is sitting there and all of his faithfulness to God has resulted in him living in the luxury of a prison.

He's in a prison cell.

And from that prison cell, he sends a message through his followers to Jesus, Are you really the one?

Because this isn't coming out like I thought.

You see,

So often when we are weary and heavy laden, it's because we are looking at our circumstances from the perspective of the immediate, not from the perspective of there is another chapter coming, another page to be turned.

The story is not yet finished.

And so John, he is very weary and heavy laden because of doubt.

And that's what causes a lot of people to become paralyzed in their faith, is they just have too many questions and they struggle to take that step of faith.

And what does Hebrews 11 say?

Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

And so we must have faith.

And sometimes doubt can be the enemy of faith.

And don't hear me say that doubt is always a sin.

It is not.

Doubt is a good thing if it causes you to do what John did, and that was seek answers from God.

And by the way, when he did, he got a great response.

He's kind of going, are you really the Messiah?

And the answer came back.

Well, okay, let me give you, let me see here, the dead rise, the deaf hear, the blind see, yeah, he's Messiah.

Okay, just look at what God has done in and through him.

And so his doubt led to a question.

That's a good form of doubt.

But sometimes doubt leads us to paralysis.

Now on the other side, if you go into chapter 12, you have another aspect or another cause for being weary and heavy laden, and that is legalism.

It was the Pharisees.

The Pharisees and their demands of living in this

fruitful religiosity and legalism.

And Jesus didn't do really well with that either, did He?

And yet that caused them to be paralyzed.

And sometimes we get paralyzed and we are weary and heavy laden because we're trying to live up all these traditions and we don't have the freedom of Christ in grace.

And so the passage addressed to you who are weary and heavy laden, and those two words

really capture almost every cause, whether it be physical, spiritual, or emotional, that would cause us to be really tired.

So we've looked at who the passage is addressed to.

Now let us look at what does Jesus ask us to do?

We've seen the problem.

The people were weary and heavy laden.

Now let us look at the prescription.

Look at verse 28, Come to Me.

What does Jesus ask us to do?

Come to me.

Doesn't that sound simple?

But you know what?

I've met believers and I've been guilty of this myself.

When I'm facing a problem, I'll go to ChatGTP or I will go to my best friends, I will go to a self-help book, I will even go to a seminary book.

But where sometimes don't I go?

directly to the Lord.

it's kind of like the person who says, When all else fails, pray.

Wrong order.

Okay, it really is the wrong order.

So the first thing He says is, Come to Me.

And you know, those folks in the 1st century, they're not unlike us.

When they experience problems,

They went to the learned and wise.

In fact, even in verse 25, there's kind of a reference of that, they would go to the learned and wise that you see in chapter 12, those Pharisees and stuff.

But it could be said of many of us, what is found in James 4, you have not because you ask not.

We don't go to God.

And so we go to every place else.

We go to our friends.

We go to social media.

We go to self-help books.

We even turn on the television and hope some preacher out there is going to say what we need to say or hear rather than going to the very source, God's eternal Word, His body, worship.

This is where we need to be.

A few years ago, I was at a church in Kansas.

just not too far from here.

It was called Parkway Baptist Church at the time, right over by where the Legends is.

And the church had just installed their very first PowerPoint projector.

Now, that doesn't seem like a big thing, having a screen.

But 20 years ago, that was kind of a big, big thing.

And they had just bought their first projector.

And on the first Sunday of having these new highfalutin projectors, we had an electrical storm that took out both projectors.

Both of them.

And man, we had just a great worship leader and he was fretting.

He was trying to work with the company.

And what he eventually found out was that those projectors were not covered under warranty because that was an act of God.

A lightning strike is an act of God and warranty didn't cover that.

I mean, that wasn't the company's fault.

And he was all fretting and here we'd gone about 5 weeks without the projector and he was discouraged and distraught.

And I looked at him and I said,

have you asked God about this?

He kind of looked at me, dropped his head, no.

I said, why don't we pray?

And we prayed and we just said, Lord, we have to trust you.

We don't have the money to replace them.

In fact, we had just taken a special offering about six months before to buy them and be kind of weird to have another special offering to buy them again.

So we just trusted to the Lord.

what was interesting is all that correspondence that he had sent, one was an e-mail, and apparently somebody at the company that makes these projectors, it was Panasonic, somebody must have accidentally hit print on something they meant to hit delete, but they printed off one of the e-mail correspondences

And it just happened to be that the president of that region was walking by, picked it up off a copier, read the letter, and God moved his heart to give our worship director a call and he said, I would like to personally replace both projectors.

And not only did we get new projectors, but we got the latest model that they made.

I mean, it was just a great story, but it was a reminder what had not been done.

What step had been missed?

Prayer.

Come to me.

Now, sometimes when we come to God, the answer is not what we wanted, but it's what He wants us to do.

He wants us to come to Him.

And that's where we must do that.

And by the way, when we do come to Him and He answers, don't do what happened in Minnesota.

We had a terrible drought, much, much, much worse than the drought we're having now, three years drought.

And finally, our little church plant, we hosted a prayer meeting for the drought.

I don't know, Jilly, if you remember that.

But we had the biggest church in town was the Lutheran Church.

We were in a town of 1,200 people and there were 1,300 Lutherans.

Do the math, okay?

That was the big church.

And we were the little bitty Baptist Church.

We were a church plant, but we had this prayer meeting and it was packed.

It was the first time our little church building was packed.

People were standing because the drought was so severe that the farmers

If it continued, if they couldn't get a crop in, they were all losing their farms.

And while we were praying, there was no rain in the forecast.

They had those long-range forecasts, no rain.

We're praying.

And as the people are praying, the heavens start opening up and it starts raining.

And Pastor Ken from the Lutheran Church got up and said, wow, what a coincidence.

Needless to say, one church grew, one church did not.

Because everybody looked and goes, no, that was God.

We must come to Him.

And so the first thing we do is we come to Him.

Secondly, He says, take my yoke upon you.

Now, a yoke was an implement that was very common to every first century hearer.

A yoke was simply a implement to connect multiple

horses, mules, oxen, etc.

And it would connect multiple animals together so that they could multiply their effectiveness.

For example, if a mule could pull a ton, 2 mules properly yoked together could pull three ton.

Four mule could probably pull

I mean, 15 ton.

I mean, it was just amazing how the yoke would multiply the impact of those animals.

Now, by the way, yokes were wooden implements and they just happened to be made by carpenters.

So you didn't go down to Walmart to get your yoke.

You went to a carpenter.

Notice what Jesus says.

Take my yoke.

And by the way, what was Jesus?

Yeah, y'all know carpenter, of course.

He says, take my yoke.

Here's what Jesus is saying.

I have a custom-made

plan for you to join me in my work.

Wow.

Take my yoke upon you.

This is kind of a reminder that sometimes we're trying to do the work on our own.

And we need to once again be reminded that God has invited us to join him in his work.

And we're not out there just saying, okay, God, here's what I want to do.

Here, God, join me, God.

That's not how it works.

Rather, we take what God has said we ought to be doing

And we join Him in His work because remember, whose yoke is it?

It's His, but it's custom made for you.

And that's what's so beautiful about it.

God has a plan for each one of you here today.

Just as He has a plan for myself and Pastor Steve as he's traveling right now, that is so cool, what He is doing with the IMB and mission work.

And He has a plan for every one of us when we will take His yoke upon us.

And then finally, Jesus says, learn from me.

Learn from me.

And this is actually continuing the agrarian illustrations of this passage.

So a yoke is an agricultural implement, and this term learn from me is also an agricultural reference.

So back in the 1st century,

we all probably grew up watching westerns.

I'm looking at the crowd here and I'm going, okay, probably a lot of us grew up like me watching Saturday morning westerns.

And I can assure you on a Saturday morning, you would see somebody trying to break a horse.

So they'd have this wild stallion or Mustang and they would have to train it and they would do all these crazy things to break the horse and usually it broke them.

But you know, back in the first century, they were probably a whole lot smarter than those in the 19th century making black and white westerns.

Because what they would do is they would take and they would tie a rope around an old mule.

They would take the other end of the rope and they would put it around that young colt that needed to be trained.

And well, then they'd just let time go because here's what would happen.

That colt would say,

I'm ready for some food.

And it would run to the food and it would run until it ran out of rope.

Or maybe it said, I'm ready to rest in the shade.

So it would hop off over to the shade and it would go until it got to the end of its rope.

Or maybe it wanted some water.

But you know, eventually what it would realize is when that old mule decided, I'm ready to go get some food,

That old mule would just drag that colt around and pretty soon that colt would learn every time it felt the tug of the rope, it was time to do something.

Now it might be time to eat, it might be time to get some water, it might be time to rest, but that colt would learn from the tug of the rope.

I'm wondering how many of us understand that when Jesus said, learn from me, when we have the tug of the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts,

That is His marching orders.

And it's always for the good.

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus said not only does He have a custom plan, a yoke that is made just for you, that you can join Him in His work, but also that He is willing to be your teacher through the Holy Spirit so that when you feel the tug of His voice, you will obey.

You know,

There are so many times we wait to pray until we're already in trouble.

We wait until the last minute.

That's why daily Bible study, daily time in prayer and devotion, worship each and every week is so important because it keeps us mindful of what we are to do when we are weary and heavy laden.

Now, I could stop right there, but I've still got five more minutes.

So I'm going to go to the point three.

What are the results?

So we looked at the question, who's this addressed to?

Those who are weary and heavy laden.

We looked at what was it that Jesus asked us to do.

He asked us to come to me, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

But now let's look, what are the results?

Well, first of all, this is the prognosis.

This is what happens when we follow Jesus' prescription.

We find rest and release.

Now I want to make it very clear.

Rest in the context of Scripture is not laying down on the ground or on a pillow, having a pillow and sleeping.

In fact, did you know what you're doing right now?

You are in the Lord's rest.

You are worshiping.

And that word worship

is connected to the word rest.

It is a part of our responsibility.

Rest means doing what we were meant to do.

It means that we will be effective.

It means that we will have joy.

It means that we will have purpose.

And I think all of us understand that.

We all know what it feels like when you've studied really hard for a test and you suddenly realize, man, you got an A, you aced it.

Doesn't that feel good?

Or what about one of those days when you go into the office

And you get more done that day than you even anticipated.

You had 10 things on your list, you got 12 done.

Feel pretty good when you go home, don't you?

also know what it's like when you're weary and heavy laden.

Those days you have 10 things to do, somebody else gives you another seven and you only get one done, and so tomorrow you have 16 left.

You know how that's weary and wearisome.

And that's why this passage is so important because it helps us understand the problem which is the symptoms, but also the prognosis.

We will find rest.

So again, rest is where we are the burden of weariness and the release from our burden comes from.

Once we've cast off the things that hold us down, we will then start experiencing rest.

And then finally, we find effectiveness.

He says in this passage that

My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

That word easy means literally serviceable.

It's a hard word to translate, but the word easy as translated in scripture in the English means serviceable, something that is good and serviceable.

It is such a beautiful perspective that when we realize the proper attitude of hope,

The proper actions of ministry and the proper perspective of faith will bring a renewed focus.

And that sometimes is where we need to land, with a realization that sometimes our perspective of being weary and heavy laden is God's invitation to trust in Him.

It is His invitation, pause, reflect, come to Me, take My yoke upon you, learn from Me.

and you will find rest for your soul.

And here's something I found when I think about that word rest.

Over the years of Christian service, I have met many, many joyful, effective Christians.

I've met them at Sunday school teachers, ushers, those that are working and cleaning up the church and working the church kitchen.

But there are those that just have this what I call contagious Christianity and they love serving the Lord.

I have met so many joyful, joyful, effective serving Christians.

But you know what I've never met?

I have never met a joyful, lazy Christian.

I've met lazy Christians.

But I've never met one that's joyful.

Why?

It goes back to this passage.

What does it mean to find the rest and the easiness that comes from God?

It means that we find the ministry that God has for you.

Andy didn't mention that for the last seven years I worked for an organization called Baptist Homes, Senior Care in Baptist Life.

And one of the things I love to teach, and that is there is no expiration date on discipleship.

And now that I'm retired, I am living that.

There is no expiration date on discipleship.

So be effective and recover the joy