

Sunday, July 7, 2024

The Right Response

Matthew 11: 25–30

25 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. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

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.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This is not actually a scripture verse. **2** This is just random sentences that Michael wrote for a template!

1. Those who should have known him based on their knowledge of the past, did not recognize him.

Note the first phrase – "at that time." It implies a continued discourse on a particular topic. Jesus is responding to those who have rejected him – particularly the religious leaders he alludes to as the "wise and learned." Those who should have been the first to recognize him as the messiah. Those who had the deepest knowledge of the Old Testament – the law and the prophets. Because they relied on their own earthly wisdom, which by nature cannot grasp heavenly wisdom, they found it to be "hidden."

Little children, however, who do not rely on their own resources for anything, who are completely dependent on others, are open to receiving the truth of Jesus, and Jesus commonly uses the phrase "little children" or "little ones" to refer to his disciples.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

God didn't hide the knowledge of the gospel from the pharisees because they had knowledge of the Old Testament. It was their pride in their knowledge, pride in their status, pride in their power that caused them to miss the reality of the Messiah. James and Peter both write, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

In Luke 18, Jesus tells the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector:

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ 13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

In Matthew 23, Jesus says the same thing: 12 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Ultimately, the revelation of Jesus as Messiah comes to those who are open to the truth, but to the wise and learned – those who think they know better, there he is met with doubt, criticism, indifference and rejection. Those who admit they don't know all the answers, those who are hungry for truth who find it.

So far we've in chapter 11 we have talked about some of the responses to Jesus' teachings: doubt, criticism, and indifference. Now we see Jesus give us the right response.

2. We see Jesus address God directly as Father.

The tone Jesus uses here is unprecedented and contributes to the case of Jesus as God. Jesus gives us more insight into his role within the Godhead:

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 word "committed" here is also translated as entrusted. Jesus is entrusted with all things. And, he says, no one truly knows the Son, Jesus, except the Father. No one truly knows the Father except Jesus – and those to whom he chooses to reveal him. There is a common idea out there that no one knows you as well as you do. This is not completely true, but there is a good deal of truth in that statement. Jesus is saying is that He and God the Father share infinitely mutual knowledge, and that is part of the basis for the Trinity.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Jesus, the Son of God, is the only way to the Father. He is the only way to freedom. He is the only way. He is the only truth. He is the only life. Apart from him, we're nothing. We're lost.

3. He invites us, come.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus begins this passage with revelation of truth – we accept the truth of Jesus by humbling ourselves, not relying on our own wisdom. And the revelation of the Father – which can come only through the son. He ends with an invitation into that knowledge, that relationship. The only prerequisite needed to accept that invitation is to recognize your need for it. To humble yourself like the tax collector in Luke 18, who said have mercy on me, a sinner.

What is a yoke? There are two types of yokes. There was an animal yoke, which harnessed two animals – oxen or horses – or whatever together to pull a cart. So, when the Bible says not to be yoked with an unbeliever. In your marriage if you are both following the Lord and walking in step together then you are following Christ together and then here is unity. But if you are not both following Christ, there is going to be friction and conflict, because even though you are harnessed together you are trying to walk in two different directions.

The other kind of yoke, which is what Jesus is referring to here, metaphorically, is a human yoke, which is like a bar that you carry that helps to evenly distribute the weight of a load across your shoulders. Think of the videos for non-profits that drill wells in Africa, where women will walk miles a day to get water with a yoke over their shoulders to carry two buckets of water back and forth.

R.T. France puts it, “each is an unwelcome restriction that is gladly thrown off when the work is done, but the purpose of a human yoke is to make it easier to carry or pull a load. If there is a burden to be borne, it is better with a yoke than without.”

We have all carried burdens: things that have been weighing you down, difficulty focusing because your mind keeps trailing off in worry, trying to earn God’s favor, time spent striving to get it all done and we are burned out. Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light, yet it may not feel like it. We might be carrying things that Jesus does not ask us to carry.

We do not need to carry the weight of the law, guilt and shame from our past, worries of this life; Jesus says take it off.

Jesus says take my yoke and learn from me. His yoke brings rest, not weariness. It is a symbol of obedience –an obedience that comes from the renewal of our souls.

We are empowered by his spirit, as we walk in step with him, we produce the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – against such things there is no law.

Jesus begins his ministry identifying with sinners when He asked to be baptized. He did not have anything to repent of and did not have to be baptized, but he chose to. Jesus ends his ministry identifying with sinners. He did not have anything to be crucified for, he chose to endure it, for us. He chose to take on our sin. We have all fallen short of the standard of the Kingdom– but Christ invites us to follow him, he has provided a way to eternal life, a way to a relationship with God.

Jesus invites us to come. Follow me. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. This is the right response.

QUESTIONS:

1. "It's as clear as a whistle" or "It's as clear as glass." We have heard these expressions, what do they mean to you? Have you ever had someone say this to you about something you were discussing or a decision you had to make? Think back over the last few weeks. In what areas of your life could you be categorized as the wise and learned that Jesus mentions? What does it look like to receive the word like "little children"?
2. What was your understanding of the Trinity in the environment in which you grew up? Was there a certain person of the Trinity who was emphasized more? Father, Son or Holy Spirit? Is there a person of the Trinity that you have felt more connected to? What's the hardest part of the Trinity for you to grasp?
3. What healthy and unhealthy ways of resting do you tend to lean towards? What makes you tired? How do you relax? How are we taught to rest by the world? How are we taught to lead restless lives, or do you believe that we are taught to lead restless lives?
4. According to Matt 11:27, how did Jesus respond to stresses? What truths about the Father did Jesus Himself rest in? In what areas of your life would you say you are laboring or weary? Why is Jesus's offer of rest important for the Christian life? How do the truths that Jesus knew about His Father give you comfort? How would you respond to someone who said the Christian life was burdensome? How have you experienced the rest that God gives us? What is it like?