

WALKING WITH JESUS

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By Pastor Stan
Matthew 11:28-30

PASTOR STAN WEESE

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INTRO.

-- I had the opportunity a week ago to attend a pre-release screening of the new movie "42," the story of Jackie Robinson's courageous decision to be the first black baseball player in the major leagues. It's a great movie about a great person and a great event. In the beginning of the movie Jackie gets a great invitation. Robinson, who is a talented baseball player but like all blacks at the time is barred from playing in the big leagues, gets a surprise invitation to a meeting with Branch Rickey, the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers who wants Jackie to become a player for the Dodgers, making him the first and only black player in major league baseball. That was a great and historic invitation, but it wasn't the greatest invitation ever given.

Probably the greatest invitation in history is the one that we're going to look at today, and it's an invitation given to you.

Matthew 11

-- Let me describe the context for this passage. This is a pivotal chapter in Matthew's Gospel. The focus here is on who Jesus really is and what that means for us. The chapter starts with John the Baptist in prison and wondering if Jesus is who John thought He was, the Christ, the promised Messiah. When John sends messengers to Jesus with this question about Jesus' identity, Jesus tells them to return to John and to report the works that they saw Jesus performing - giving sight to the blind and making the lame to walk - deeds that testify to Jesus' deity and divine mission.

Then Jesus proceeds to denounce the cities that had witnessed these miraculous signs but had still refused to turn to accept and believe in Him. Jesus goes on to reveal even more about His identity by describing the harmonious unity that He has with the Father and that Jesus Himself is the only one who can enable us to know the Father. Then Jesus concludes with what may be the greatest invitation of His ministry and perhaps in all human history.

Matthew 11:28-30

I. The Invitation (v. 28)

A. The Inviter (28a)

-- "Come to me"

1. "Come"

a. Inviting God

-- What we see here is that the God of the Bible is an "inviting" God. It's trendy here in America to say that all religions are basically the same, but that is clearly mistaken. You can search through the religious texts of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism and not find this image of the inviting God, but you find it repeatedly throughout the Bible.

Isaiah 1:18 (NASV) "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool."

Isaiah 55:1-3a Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ²</sup>Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. ³</sup>Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

b. Enabling God

-- Now, this invitation goes out to all, but this general call to "come" to God would never be accepted apart from God's effectual call that awakens a desire for God in the heart of the sinner.

Cf., v. 27

-- The only ones who accept the call and who come to know God are those whom the Son (Jesus) chooses, and those whom the Son chooses are the ones whom the Father draws to the Son.

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them

2. "Come to me"

-- It's important to notice that the invitation given by Jesus says "Come to me." Jesus doesn't say, "Come to these doctrines" or "Come to church" (both of which are important things), but He says "Come to me." That's where the Christian life begins, where all spiritual begins, with coming to Christ, entering into a personal relationship with Him. You don't become a Christian by coming to a church any more than you become Adrian Peterson by putting on a number 28 jersey or Joe Mauer by putting on a number 7 uniform or LeBron James by putting on a number 6 jersey.

-- The desire in the heart of God is for you to know Him, personally and intimately. That's why we were created, and the only way we can come to fulfill that purpose and to know God is through Christ.

John 14:6 I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

B. The Invitees (28b)

-- "all you who are weary and burdened"

-- Jesus' invitation is addressed to those who are worn down and worn out by the problems and concerns of life, especially those who see and feel their spiritual neediness, to those who are burdened with a crushing load of guilt, to those who are laboring to get free of their bondage to sin, and to those who are striving to atone for their past transgressions, trying desperately to make up for their sinful failures.

Jesus' invitation is extended to people like the outcast woman at the well in Samaria, who came to draw water at a time when she would be alone and wouldn't have to face the other women. Jesus invites her to come to Him. Jesus' invitation is given to those like the sinner in the parable who went to the Temple at the same time as the religious and morally upright Pharisee. The Pharisee thanked God that he was a good man, but the sinner could only fall on his knees, burdened by his unworthiness, and cry out for God's mercy. In one sense, Jesus' invitation is offered to and needed by the self-righteous Pharisee as well as the sinner, but only those who see their own unworthiness and feel the weight of their own sinfulness will ever hear and respond to God's invitation to "come."

C. The Promise (28c)

-- Jesus makes a wonderful promise to those who accept His gracious invitation.

v. 28c, "and I will give you rest"

-- If you're wearied by trying to fill up the emptiness in your soul, if you're burdened by the guilt and regrets of past sins, if you're in despair because you can't get free from sins that are holding you in bondage, that's good. Your weariness, your burden, your despair are the working of God to bring you to the One who can give you rest. When you feel wearied, burdened, and despairing is when you can hear and accept Jesus' invitation to come to Him, and when you come to Him, He promises to give you rest - rest from your emptiness, rest from your guilt, rest from your bondage.

And then Jesus goes on to explain how it is that we find and experience His rest.

II. The Commands (vv. 29-30)

-- Jesus actually speaks here about a second rest. The first rest (in verse 28) is one that is given; this second rest (in verses 29-30) is one that is found. The first rest comes from entering into a relationship with Christ; this second rest comes from walking in fellowship with Christ. The first rest is a result of accepting Jesus' invitation; the second rest is a result of obeying His commands. Jesus gives two commands that are prerequisites for this rest in verse 29.

A. "Take my yoke upon you" (29a)

-- The first command is to take Jesus' yoke upon us. The yoke was a very common object in Jesus' day. Its purpose, of course, was to join two animals (often oxen) together so that they would move and

work together. Jesus uses this image of being yoked together to describe the discipleship life. Like the image of the vine and its branches that we saw in John 15, the yoke also pictures our union with Christ and stresses the need for us to maintain a closeness to Christ. Oxen that are yoked together are walking close to one another, side-by-side and going in the same direction. When Jesus tells us to be yoked together with Him, He's telling us to stay close to Him. This is critical because Jesus is not only the one who gives us spiritual life; He is also the one who nurtures and sustains that life.

B. "Learn from me" (v. 29b)

1. The order of these commands is important. We can't obey this second command until we have obeyed the first command; we can't learn from Jesus until we have got into the yoke with Him. That's what it means to be a "disciple" - to be in the yoke with Jesus and learning from Him.

2. Jesus adds an interesting statement to this command:

"for I am gentle and humble in heart"

I think that Jesus is doing two things in this explanation.

a. First, He is reassuring us that it's safe to get in the yoke with Him. He will treat us gently and humbly as He did the woman taken in adultery, refusing to cast a stone at her but extending forgiveness to her instead.

b. And, secondly, Jesus is telling us what it is that He wants us to learn from Him. He doesn't just want us to learn what He teaches; He wants us to learn who He is. The point of learning is not just to know more about Jesus but to become more like Jesus. That's what happens when we're in the yoke with Him, when we're walking close to Him day-by-day, when we're abiding in Him. The Holy Spirit works in us to make us more and more like Jesus, to form His character in us.

C. The Result (vv. 29c-30)

-- Jesus then tells us what will result from living this way, from getting in the yoke and walking with Jesus and learning from Him.

"and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

1. What (v. 29c)

-- "you will find rest for your souls"

a. The rest that we receive when we come to Christ is the rest of forgiveness, release from the guilt-burden of our sin.

b. But there's a further rest that comes from discipleship, from walking together with Christ, yoked with Him and learning from Him. This is the rest of fulfillment, of a life that has found purpose and meaning. This is a rest of the soul, a rest that embraces our entire inner being - mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It's a rest that produces real serenity because it cannot be destroyed by circumstances.

2. Why (v. 30)

-- Jesus closes this amazing invitation with a final assertion:

"for my yoke is easy and burden is light"

-- An "easy" yoke is one that fits right. It's like when you find a good pair of shoes, you say that they are "easy" on your feet. They fit you right good to you. They absorb the jolts ease the loads you carry. That's what Jesus wants to do for you - to give you the life that fits you best, the life that you were made to live, the life that's tailor-made for you, the life that will bring you greatest meaning and fulfillment, the life that comes only to those who come to Him and walk with Him.