

Simplify – Just a Closer Walk
1/16/22
Matthew 11:25-30 | Psalm 46:10

Most of you know I played baseball into college and that I have a son who is a baseball player today – who Meg and I enjoy chasing around the SE to see him hit, pitch, and field. Needless to say, I love baseball. Ever since I was a kid, I've loved/played the game.

DYK – baseball is both the simplest and most difficult sport to play – you could say that it has a *simple complexity* about it. For example, hitting a baseball is easily considered the hardest activity to perform in sports – yet whether throwing/hitting – the mechanics of baseball are as simple as FIRM, FOOT, FIRE.

Recently, while surfing the web, I came across an old video where Nolan Ryan, along w/ his pitching coach, were giving instruction to a young Randy Johnson. In the clip, Tom House was explaining to RJ that pitching was as simple as firm, foot, fire. Set you right side FIRM, plant your left FOOT in the ground, and FIRE to the plate... FIRM, FOOT, FIRE!

You know, in many ways, the Christian life could also be described as *simple complexity*. It too is simple yet very challenging to do – maybe even as simple as *firm, foot, fire*. In fact, as I was pondering the idea, I was reminded of a familiar passage in **Matthew 11:25-30**, where Jesus explained the (3) actions necessary to find peace/rest w/ God.

Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, b/c 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. "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. Come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

These words in Matthew 11 are arguably the most beautiful invitation ever extended to mankind. In fact, *it's fair to say there's never been a greater plea to the human heart than God's extension of grace to a desperate soul in their time of need.* And here in this passage, (3) verbs God offers to bring us peace/rest –

COME + TAKE + LEARN = REST

If you're just joining us, we're 3-weeks into a New Year's series entitled – **Simplify**. To simply is to make something less complicated and more straightforward by reducing it to the basic essentials. Our hope in this series is to offer sound spiritual guidance to extricate ourselves from the unnecessary/complicated by reducing it back to the basic essentials of living in alignment, under the influence of God and His will.

In week 1, Craig offered us insight in how to declutter our souls. Then last week, we spoke of the application of the tithe to assist us in ordering our lives around the will/priorities of God understanding that God is far more interested in what He wants to **GIVE** to us and do **IN/THRU** us than what He can get **FROM** us.

This AM, I want to turn our attention to how we can simplify our *spiritual lives* so that we can do as the Psalmist suggested in **Psalm 46:10** – and *be still and know that He is God*. How we can find **REST** in Him?

Re-read – *Come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

I believe in this event, Jesus invites us to simplify our spiritual lives by applying the **CTL Principle**.

I Will You **COME**?

Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden,

As we look at what it means to **come** – let's first identify the audience w/ whom Jesus was speaking realizing that His invitation was to anyone/everyone including the **seeker**, **skeptic** and **scoffer**. Ordinary people from every walk of life weary/heavy laden just hoping to make it from one day to the next.

weary (*kopiao*) refers to someone who's worked themselves to the point of exhaustion. They've labored tirelessly; even worse, it refers to a person who has expended their energy on the wrong things.

IOW – not only have they worked themselves to death, but they leaned their ladder against the wrong house.

NOW – this is not only interesting but important, b/c in this exchange, **Jesus isn't inviting us to dump our earthly burdens on Him**, but rather, He's inviting us to surrender our lives into His grace. **Let me explain...**

Jesus was offering a way of hope to everyone exhausted in trying to keep the **613 do/don'ts of the Jewish Law**. They were weary from trying to earn their salvation thru human effort. What's worse, He tells them that even if they could keep the Law, the Law was incapable of getting them to heaven.

Yet they're not just weary, they're also heavy-laden...

heavy-laden – meaning at some point in life, these people were dumped on and run over – so burdened and overwhelmed by life they were in total despair.

Jesus' point is simple – whether you're **internally** exhausted in your attempt to please God thru human effort or overrun by the **external** things in life so that you've given up – **you're now right where you need to be** – absolutely destitute, poor in spirit – desperate!

Jesus is extending His grace to (3) types of people:

- People weary from their human search for God
- People dissatisfied by their religious experience
- People burdened by the crushing weight of sin/guilt

IOW – **Jesus is extending His grace to everyone, everywhere**, no matter who they are; or what they've done or not done. He says, **Come... I'll give you rest.**

come – is an invitation to **everyone** to make a pragmatic faith decision about what you're going to do w/ Jesus. In essence, Jesus said, *"You've tried every way but God's way; and how has it worked out for you so far? So, why not try something different? Try Me!"*

Often in marriage counseling, I'll look at a couple who are failing miserably at marriage doing it their way – and I'll say, *"You've failed doing it your way, so are you now ready to try it God's way?"*

Textually – **come** means to leave your godless, aimless, and sinful human way behind to enter into intimacy/dependency on Christ. It's an **invitation to exchange** your burdens/brokenness for His love, peace, and life.

To **come** means following Jesus is not a creed to recite, a church to attend, a ritual to repeat, or a pastor or priest to follow – **come** is a simple active, faith response to trusting Jesus and following His leading in our lives.

So, if you're tired of all the religious games that lead to nowhere... if your fed-up w/ trying to do it on your own, or if you're tired of living under the weight and guilt of sin – then why not turn to Jesus and **COME!**

But Jesus didn't stop w/ just an invitation to **COME** – he also invites us to **TAKE**...

II Will You **TAKE**?

Take my yoke upon you...

take (*airo*) to lift up. It's a **word of exchange**. By faith, we're to give up the flawed, exhausting yoke of human effort and attempting to keep the Law to **take as our own** the sufficient/life-changing yoke of Christ. Jesus is asking, "*Will you give up your way for my way b/c my way is the only one that works.*"

To grasp this idea requires an understanding – **yoke**.

We typically think of a **yoke** as a hand-hewn block of wood placed over the neck/shoulders of an ox pulling a cart so that the driver has control over the animal. **But was NOT what Jesus was referring to.**

In the ancient world – a yoke was a metaphor for **submission** – symbolizing obedience to one's master. More specifically, a Rabbi's yoke was his interpretation of the **613 rules** in the Torah, Talmud, Mishnah he expected his disciples to obey.

In Jesus' invitation – he offers an exchange of yokes. He said – instead of trying to follow the 613 rules of the Law that were never intended to save – **take** my yoke and allow me to be your Savior. For where the yoke of the Law falls short, My yoke will be sufficient.

Later, in Matthew 22, Jesus summed up His yoke in (2) commands – **love God** and **love your neighbor**.

An expert in the Law tested Jesus w/ a question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. This is the first and greatest command. The second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

IOW – put your faith in Jesus and then see how it compels you treat others. You will know it's authentic when treat others the way Jesus has treated you.

So, **COME** to Jesus exchanging your way for His way. **TAKE** up His grace by loving God and loving others the way Jesus loves you... and finally, **LEARN**...

III Will You **LEARN**?

...and learn from me...

learn (*manthano*) to follow my lead and example. It implies accepting/applying God's truth to one's life.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22

This is an invitation into **followership**. Jesus is inviting us to strap on our sandals to become the 13th disciple to discover who He is and who He has called us to be.

Sadly, I fear too many of us have misunderstood this invitation. We've viewed it as a mechanism to save us FROM hell (and it does) not realizing there's so much more. His grace isn't primarily about what we're saved **from** but what we've been saved INTO – an intimate relationship w/ the Creator in which He wants us to become just like Him. ***He wants us to learn from Him how to be Jesus to the world around us.***

Meaning, Jesus wants us to be a student in His school. He's given us a great **textbook** to study/apply, a great **theme** to master, a great **teacher** to guide us, and a great **thrill** to experience. Our textbook is the Bible. The theme is the person of Christ. The teacher is the H.S. and the thrill is to experience and express the real purpose of this learning. Herb Hodges

It's more than just being religious; it's about having a relationship. It's about knowing God and following His leading by living out our faith in the daily highs/lows of life w/ an ambition to trust/obey.

Jesus was saying there's more to this thing called Christianity than just getting saved – there's an entire life w/ God that requires our intentional submission and willingness to follow. **Come learn from Me!**

Anything less is to come halfway. We're not called just to **COME** and **TAKE**, but also to **LEARN**.

To intellectually acknowledge Christ as God and engage in religious activity does NOT make for a true Christ-follower who has found God's rest. God's rest only comes to the person who has abandoned himself to God by deciding to **COME | TAKE | LEARN**.

So, **COME** – exchange your way for His way. **TAKE** – embrace His grace by loving God so that you are enabled to love others the way Jesus loves you... and finally, **LEARN** – that is, seek first. Put yourself under His Word and influence so that you can not only know the truth, but also live the truth.

Where do I start:

- Start w/ a daily devotional Bible reading plan
- Meet w/ a small group of believers to dialogue
- Connect/commit to a local Bible teaching church

TAKEAWAYS

The Christian life is a matter of simple complexity. While it is not easy, it is as simple as come, take, learn.

The yoke of Jesus is found in loving God w/ all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength – and allowing His love in us to love others the same way He has loved us.

Start w/ a commitment to spend time daily w/ God in His Word followed by gathering w/ other believers to discuss/apply Scripture, and then find and faithfully participate in a Bible teaching church.

NEXT STEPS

1 Spend time this week in your quiet time or w/ another person discussing these GROW questions.

G The Bible speaks to priorities – like *remember your creator, seek first His kingdom, and have no other gods before Me*. Why is our focus and ambitions so critical to simplifying life?

R What does it mean to you to *be still* before the Lord? What are some ways you practice *stillness* before the Lord?

O Psalm 91 uses words – *refuge, trust, fortress, and shelter* – What was the psalmist intending to teach us about being still before the Lord?

W Will you make time each day over the next week to practice stillness/seeking the Lord?

2 Find and commit to a devotional Bible reading plan and ask 2-3 people to meet with you to talk about the truths of God you are learning.