

FINDING REST FOR YOUR SOULS

Psalm 19:11 gives us two reasons we should want to *know* what the Bible says—and *do* what the Bible says! What are the two reasons? **Reason #1** is declared in the first half of the verse: “Moreover by **them** [God’s Words] is thy servant warned...” **Why** does God warn us? Because **He loves us** and wants to **keep us** from that which will harm us!

--One of the warnings we looked at is the timeless truth found in **Numbers 32:23** “...be sure your sin will find you out!” Whether our sin remains **hidden for 15 years** like it did for Joseph’s brothers—or **15 minutes** like it did for Ananias and Sapphira—God’s Word is true; and **God is true** to His Word! Our sin will find us out! Don’t think for a moment that **you** will be the one exception!

--The second warning we looked at was one from Jesus Himself as found in **Mt 7:15** “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves.” Jesus gave us this warning because false prophets are **real**...and they are **a threat**...and they are a **threat to us** and our church!

Last week we looked at the **fruit of false teachers** as found in I Tim 6:3-5: they teach a **different** doctrine...and **disagree with sound doctrine**...and delight in **controversial questions** and **disputes** about words. We also looked at the **damage** they cause.

--What do false teachers **do** to churches? **Cause division!**

--How are we to **deal with them** that teach false doctrine? God through Paul tells us in **Romans 16:17** “Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them.**”

There are obviously numerous other **warnings** we could look at, but this week I felt led to look at the second reason we should want to *know* what God says and *do* what He says. What is **reason #2**, according to Psalm **19:11**? Notice the second half of the verse: “...and in keeping of them [God’s Words] there is great reward.” There is **blessing in obedience!** God promises **great reward** to those that keep—meaning obey—His Word!

The “reward” we will look at this morning is a familiar one: “Finding Rest for Your Souls.” We find those words from Jesus in Matthew 11. Please follow along as I read vs 25-30.

As stated just a few minutes ago, the passage here before us—especially vs 28-30—is one that many of us are familiar with. Although I haven’t preached on it before, I’ve heard sermons on it and my guess is that a number of you have as well. What I was surprised to learn as I began to study it, though, was that I really **didn’t understand** the passage as much as I thought I did!

Here’s what I mean. In verse 28, Jesus gives an invitation to those who labor and “loaded down” to come to Him—and He will give them rest. That’s all well and fine. But then Jesus says, “Take my yoke upon you....” You catch that! ‘You’re tired and worn out but come to Me! When you do, I’ll give you rest—and **a yoke!**’

The “yoke” Jesus was referring to is not the yellow part of an egg! It is a **piece of wood** used to harness two animals together so they could **work together** and **pull** some kind of a load. So taking on a yoke had to do with **work**. But how can we **have rest** if we have to take on a yoke, an instrument of work?

Another thing I have overlooked in the past—and maybe you have too—is that in vs 28, Jesus says **He will give rest**. In vs 29, however, He says **we will find**—we will **discover**—rest, which seems to be different than being **given** it. It is one thing to **give** a young person a quarter; it is quite another to tell him or her that there’s one out in the parking lot somewhere and **they need to go find** it!

So here’s at least one of the questions we will be attempting to answer this morning: Is Jesus giving the **same invitation** to the **same group** of people twice—once in vs 28 and once in vs 29—or, is Jesus giving an invitation to **one** group of people in vs 28, and a **different** invitation to a **different** group in vs 29? Let’s dig in and find out!

1. Invitation #1 – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (vs 28)

A. The invited. **Who** is it that Jesus invites? **Who** does Jesus extend His invitation to?

i. All that labour

“Labor” here is being used in the normal sense of the word—toiling, working, putting forth effort. One example we are familiar with is when Jesus told Peter to **let down his nets** to catch a bunch of fish. We have Peter’s response in **Luke 5:5** “And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have **toiled** all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” “Toiled” comes from same word as labor. Three more things that are important regarding this word:

- 1) It is in the **present** tense—meaning continuous action. Someone who is continually working, laboring, toiling
- 2) It is in the **active** voice—meaning the **individual themselves** is doing the working. This will make more sense when we look at “heavy laden” which is in the passive voice.
- 3) It is not restricted to the laboring of the **body**; it can also refer to the laboring...the toiling...the working of our **minds**. We’ve all been there, right? Our **bodies** are restful...and still...and not working—but **our mind** is laboring...and toiling...and working hard...and refusing to rest!

It’s not just those who are **continuously working** that Jesus invites to come to Him for rest.

It is also... **ii. All that are heavy laden**

To be heavy laden is to be **loaded down** with a burden. The Greek word it comes from is used only twice—here and in **Luke 11:46** “And He [Jesus] said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye **lade** men” [you load men down] with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.”

--In Luke 11:46, the lawyers are the ones that are **actively adding** the burdens onto others.

--In Mt 11:28, Jesus is talking to the **receivers**—the ones who had the **burdens piled upon** them. They **didn’t** put the burdens on themselves. They were passive; the burden was **put on them**.

Here’s an illustration that I believe will help you understand the difference between these two groups. Like many of you, my wife and I burn wood. When I go out to my woodshed—by myself—and use my **right** hand to load my **left** arm up with a load of wood, I am **actively laboring** to carry it into the house.

If, however, I **take Louise** outside to the woodshed...and tell her to hold out her arms...and proceed to fill up **her arms** with a load of wood, she is being “heavy-laden” with the load of wood. She didn’t **actively** do it—she **passively** received it! Just for the record, this **hasn’t happened yet** and I’m fairly certain it won’t!

But Jesus’ invitation is not to people who are laboring to carry **wood** into their house! In fact, Jesus’ invitation does not have to do with **physical** labor at all! Jesus’ promise—to those who accept His invitation—is that He will give them rest for **their souls!**

Those that are laboring, then, are ones that are looking for rest **for their souls**; in other words, salvation! Do people **try to labor**—do they try to **work**—for salvation—meaning **forgiveness of sins**? They certainly do!

How do we know? Because of all the warnings God’s Word has **against working** for salvation!

Rom 3:28 “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith **without the deeds** of the law.”

Eph 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and **that not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God: ⁹**Not of works**, lest any man should boast.”

Titus 3:5 “**Not by works of righteousness which we have done**, but according to His mercy He saved us...”

What **kind of labor** do people try to do to earn their way into heaven? They work at **keeping the 10** commandments, but soon realize they **put themselves before God** almost daily. They work hard to **keep the Golden Rule**, but soon realize that most days they **don’t treat people** the way they want to be treated.

They yield to the lust of the **flesh**...and the lust of the **eyes**...and the **pride of life** so they work harder to do better in hopes of **getting rid of guilt**, but that only adds to the burden! Others tell them, ‘You’re doing it wrong! You need to join a certain church...and give money to that church...and serve in that church. You need to get baptized...and take communion...and read your Bible...and pray!’ So you do what they say—but there is **no rest** for your souls. In fact, your working makes your burden even heavier!

But then, there is... **B. The invitation**

What is the invitation? What does Jesus tell us to do? “Come unto me...”

Think of all the different “tones” that are used with the simple word “come.”

--Sometimes it is used in **sternness**—like when a child disobeys and needs to be reprimanded

--Sometimes it is used in **excitement** when you want to show someone something you think they would like to see

--Sometimes it is used in **urgency**—like when you need someone’s help and time is of the essence

--Sometimes it is used in **disgust**, like “Why did you come here?”

--Sometimes it is out of **exasperation**, like doing something for someone the umpteenth time!

--We don’t see that here in Jesus, though, do we? What do we see? We see the **heart of Jesus**—the gentle, humble, loving tender One, saying “Come; come unto me!”

‘But **You don’t know** what I’ve done,’ you may protest. To which Jesus replies, ‘**I do know!** That’s why I came...that’s why I died...and I can **forgive you** and **receive you** because I paid **your** penalty for you!’

C. The impact. What is the impact—what are the results—of accepting Jesus’ invitation to come to Him? Rest...peace...freedom. Freedom from **fear**...freedom from **guilt**...freedom from **judgment**—and freedom from **laboring** for something you could never attain! **But there is more**—much, much more! There is **acceptance** by God...and **adoption** into God’s family. There is forgiveness—forever! There is a new joy...and a new nature... and a new purpose!

And there is the promise of **spending eternity** with the One who loved us—and gave Himself for us!

What is invitation #1 found in vs 28? **For sinners seeking salvation to come to the Savior!**

Now let’s consider... **2. Invitation #2** as found in vs 29 “Take my yoke upon you, learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

Back to the question I asked earlier—is this the **same** invitation Jesus asked in the verse we just looked at—or is it different? We’re going to change the order and look at the **invitation** first, then see if we can determine who **the invited** are.

A. The invitation

Whereas the invitation in vs 28 was to do **one** thing—“come”—in vs 29, Jesus asks the invitees to do **two** things—take His yoke upon them and learn of Him.

i. Take His yoke

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Take my yoke upon you”? First, it’s in **the imperative**—meaning it is a command! It is an act of the will. It is something we **can decide** to do—or **refuse** to do! That was also true of the word “come” in vs 28. Jesus **wants us** to come to Him for salvation but does not force us to!

I mentioned earlier that a **yoke is a piece of wood**—like a beam—that was used to **harness** two animals together so they could **work together** and **pull** some kind of a load. That is certainly something Jesus’ hearers would have been quite familiar with. Based on that, many commentators—and preachers—suggest that **taking Jesus’ yoke** means to be “hitched up with Jesus” and **work together with Him** to pull our load—whatever that may be. He—being God, of course—would **do the pulling** and we would just be walking alongside Him, so to speak. I’m not convinced, however, that that is what Jesus meant. Why do I say that?

Because there is **another meaning** of “yoke” that Jesus—and His hearers—would have been familiar with based on the Old Testament. Here are a couple of examples:

In Genesis 27, we have the account of **Jacob pretending to be Esau**. Unknowingly Isaac—the father of Jacob and Esau—pronounces a blessing **upon Jacob** that he had intended for Esau. Esau still wants to be blessed by his father, so here is what Isaac says to him. **Genesis 27:40** “And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt **have the dominion**, that thou shalt **break his yoke** from off thy neck.”

Jeremiah 27:8 “And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom **which will not serve** the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will **not put their neck under the yoke** of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.”

The yoke, then, was a word used to **symbolize being a servant** to someone! Esau was a servant to his younger brother Jacob—and the nations were to submit themselves to the yoke—the rulership—of King Neb!

The same meaning is seen in the NT. **1 Tim 6:1** “Let as many servants as are **under the yoke** count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.”

In other words, servants that are under the yoke—meaning under the rulership—of a master, need to honor them! Back to what Jesus meant.

Based on that, I tend to think Jesus is saying this: ‘Once you come to me...and find rest for your souls—meaning salvation—you need to submit yourself to **my** leadership. You need to let **me** be your Master; you need to **serve** Me! But do it willingly—**take it** upon you. And when you do, you will find that my yoke is easy—and my burden is light!

Not only does Jesus ask us to willingly submit to His leadership, He also asks us to... **ii. Learn of Him**

What does that mean? We are to increase in our knowledge of Him—our understanding of Him—just as friends increase in their understanding of one another. Much more could be said, but need to move on...

Now... **B. The invited**

Does Jesus **ask unbelievers** to submit to Jesus as the Master of their lives? Does Jesus **ask unbelievers** to learn of Him and get to know Him personally? Yes—but **only after** they become a believer!

--Jesus **does not ask** an unbeliever to submit to His leadership because **they can't!**

--And Jesus **does not ask** an unbeliever to learn of Him and follow Him because **they can't!**

So Jesus' invitation to “Take His yoke upon us—and to learn of Him”—is **for the believer**; the children of God!

Question: Why would Jesus have an invitation **for believers** immediately follow an invitation for unbelievers?

Because once you come to Jesus for salvation, you are to immediately put yourself **under His leadership and authority and start learning** of Him. **There is no break**—and it almost seems they are one and the same—because they are **supposed to be one** and the same!

Somehow, we have come up with the unBiblical notion that we can accept Jesus' invitation **for salvation**, but then **drift around** and do our own thing for 1 or 2 or 5 or 10 years **before making** Him the Lord of our lives! That is **not the way** it is supposed to be—and I believe Jesus is implying—if not declaring—that very thing right here!

C. The impact. What will be the impact—what will the results be—if we take Jesus' yoke upon us and learn of Him? We shall find **rest** unto our souls. Some of you may be thinking, ‘Wait a minute, Pastor! Didn't Jesus **give us rest** when we came to Him for salvation like it says in verse 28?’

To which I reply, “Yes!” But there is a **rest after rest**; there is a **second** rest. Let's ponder this for a bit. The **first rest** comes from **being forgiven**. **Hebrews 4:10** “For he that is entered into His [God's] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.”

In other words, when it finally clicks in our **thick heads** and hard hearts that we cannot save ourselves no matter how hard we work—and we humbly come to Christ in repentance and faith—we cease from working to be forgiven. But we aren't immediately taken to heaven, are we?

We are **left here**—in a sin-cursed world—but given a **new nature**.

--With our new nature comes a **new desire**—we want to please God! But our sin nature within us—and the temptations around us—stop us from pleasing God. We sin—and it bothers us. So we need rest for our souls!

--Sin in the **lives of others** confuses us...and frustrates us...and hurts us—so we need rest for our souls!

--We observe the world which we live in and see abortion...and child trafficking...and drug overdose...and mass shootings...and wonder why God is allowing evil to seemingly win! We need rest for our souls.

--And bad things happen personally to us. Unexpected bills come...cars break down...jobs are lost. We—or our loved ones—lose their health. Sometimes we even lose them. So we need rest for our souls!

That is what I mean by the **rest after rest**; the second rest. We need soul rest, don't we? Where does that rest come from? You won't find that rest if you seek first **your** kingdom—and you won't find rest if you fail to learn **of** Jesus and **from** Jesus!

We **find that rest**—we discover it—as we take Jesus' yoke upon us—and learn of Him. Are you doing that? Are you submitting to His leadership in your life? Are you learning of Him by spending time with Him in His Word—and communing “heart-to-heart” with Him? When you do that, the promise of Jesus is that **you will find rest!**

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

1. First, come to Jesus for salvation if you've never done that. That is the heart of Jesus; that is His desire!

How do you do that? By coming to Him in repentance and faith!

How do you come to Jesus when He is in heaven—and you are here on earth?

You need to let us know of that need so one of us can sit down with you...and open the Bible...and answer your questions...and show you what Jesus says about receiving Him as your Savior!

2. Second—for those of us who are saved—is Jesus your Master? Have you taken His yoke upon you? Are you wanting to please and serve Him?

3. Third, do you come to God with your burdens? He is the only one that can give you rest!