



Come To Jesus

Matthew 11:28 David Sunday May 7, 2017

The Bible says, “In the heart a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” And I find that to be true sometimes in preaching as well. Most of the time I like to plan out where I’m heading and work passage by passage through different sections of the Bible. But sometimes I find my plans are stymied and I need to go to those places in Scripture where my heart is most refreshed. That’s where I am now. I’m not going to try to plan too far ahead in my preaching. What I started last week I hope to finish, but I want to take you right now to where my own heart is being refreshed and strengthened.

I need to hide away in the love of Jesus. I need to run to where He can slake my thirst. I invite you to come with me today to the fountain of living waters, to bend low beside these refreshing streams and drink deeply of our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me to Matthew 11. There are few places in Scripture that are more sweet and more satisfying to my thirsty soul than these verses. I’m going to read verses 25-30, but we’re going to hone in on one verse—Matthew 11:28. Listen to the living words of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as powerful and penetrating and able to transform today as they were when they first came forth from our Savior’s mouth 2,000 years ago. This is the living Word of God:

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

How sweet and precious are these words in verse 28: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” John Newton preached a whole series of sermons on

these verses, and I'm going to update some of his thoughts today as they've been filtered through my heart. I'll share with you three points from this verse:

- 1) Who is Jesus calling?
- 2) What does it mean to come to Him?
- 3) What is implied in His promised rest?

1. Who is Jesus calling?

"Come to me." To whom is Jesus saying that? If you received an engraved invitation to a state dinner at the White House, you would respond. What would you think of a person who never RSVP'd to such an invitation? What would you think of a person who was offered the most lucrative promotion at work, with a company car, paid vacations and a great retirement package, plus the best salary—but he never showed up to sign the contract? What would you think of a person who got a voice mail from a very generous benefactor who said, "I am encouraged by the work you're doing. I want to bless you and encourage you to keep it up by offering you a \$10 million grant"—but the person never returns his phone calls?

On NPR a few years ago, I heard about a man who had won the Nobel Prize for literature, but they said, "It is not this man's practice to show up at ceremonies to receive the awards that are presented to him." I thought, "How arrogant to receive such a distinguished honor, but not even to have the humility to come and receive it gratefully."

But you, my friends, are listening to an infinitely greater invitation than that which the White House could offer, or the Nobel Laureate committee could give you, or any wealthy benefactor could donate. You are listening to the King of Glory and Grace, the One Who created all things and Who died on the cross to redeem you from your sins, saying to you, inviting you, "Come to Me." Never, my friends, has so great an invitation been so broadly and carelessly neglected. Never has so generous a gift been rejected by so many and received by so few.

Millions have heard these words and gone their way, never giving them a second thought. There's a particular condition that renders a person receptive to this gracious invitation and if you don't realize this is true of you, these words won't sound like music in your ears. You've got to see yourself as weary and heavy laden in order for this invitation to sound sweet and precious to you. The words in verse 28, "All who labor," speak of toil. They speak of weariness. You can get weary either because you're weak or because you're working really hard. When you put these two things together—weakness plus hard work—you get weariness. It's like a math formula:

Weakness + hard work = weariness.

You can get relief when you're working hard if you can lay down your burden at night and be done with it, and wake up in the morning refreshed. But what happens when you have to

carry this burden on your back, and it presses you down night and day. And no matter where you go, it's always there. It's even with you when you're sleeping. The moment you wake up, you feel it. What a weariness this is! That is what it means to be 'heavy laden.' Not only are you weak, not only are you working hard, but you've got a burden that you can't get rid of. That's heavy laden. You can't comfort a person at all who's heavy laden or give him any relief—unless you can get rid of that burden. Unless you can lift that burden from his back.

Lots of people don't take Jesus up on this wonderful invitation, "Come to Me," because they think, "I'm doing just fine in the world." They don't feel weak. They don't feel the weariness. They don't feel the burden of their sin. They think, "I'm doing all right." But friend, I warn you; if you can rest without Jesus now, do not think that you will be able to rest without Him for eternity. If you think you can find rest without Jesus in this world, there will be no rest for all eternity—until you find your rest in Him now. We are burdened, whether we know it or not. The guilt of sin is a heavy load. The weight of the guilt of just one sin is enough to crush the conscience and press you down into a miry pit of destruction—unless someone comes and lifts you up out of it.

We all have things in our lives over which we are embarrassed, things of which we are ashamed, things we don't want to be reminded of but we cannot forget. What would it be like to have a person sounding in your ears, from morning until evening, every day of your life, the worst thing you ever did—and you cannot get rid of it? Wouldn't that drive you crazy? Wouldn't that weary you? Once your conscience has been awakened to the guilt of sin, you will not be able to find rest until you come to Jesus for relief.

It's not just the guilt of sin—it's the power of sin, too. We all carry within our hearts indwelling sin. Any one of us is capable of anything. There is no sin which you're not capable of committing. You once thought you were a pretty good person, but then you looked into God's law and you saw not only does that law demand perfection on the outside, but it also demands a heart that loves God and wants to live for Him, being motivated by pure and holy motives. And you feel like the Apostle Paul felt when he said in Romans 7:9-11:

I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

It's the weight of the burden of the guilt and the power of sin. John Newton says it well. "The more an awakened sinner strives against his corruptions, the more they seem to increase." You try harder and harder to fight against sin, but all you see is that sin is increasing all around

you. And finally you get to the point where you say, “Who can deliver me from this body of sin and death?” Ehen you’ve come to that point, that’s when you’re ready to come to Jesus. That’s when His invitation sounds like music in your ears.

For anyone who’s seeking salvation through the works of the law, through obedience to God’s commands, Galatians 3:10 says, “*All who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.*” You’ve got to obey it perfectly, God says. Nothing less can please the Lord. James 2:10 says, “*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*” There’s no way my obedience to God’s law can give me rest.

Anyone who has been assaulted by the powers of darkness, who knows what it’s like to be assailed by temptation, who’s ever experienced having their soul assaulted with blasphemous thoughts, who’s ever felt the fiery darts of the evil one, who knows what it’s like to have confusion filling their mind, to have the very foundations of their faith shaken, to be haunted morning to night by horrid thoughts, to think that they’re standing firm and secure, then to have the Lord hide His face from them and realize, “I am lost. I am in trouble. I am desperate without Him”— anyone who’s felt this battle with a very real enemy, the evil one, knows the sweetness of Jesus’ invitation, “Come to Me and I will give you rest.”

Is Jesus talking to you, my friend? Is this music in your ears, to hear Him say, “Come”? “Come to Me. Come to Me, you who feel it’s impossible to please God through keeping the law. Come to Me,” Jesus says, “and I will give you rest.” You who know the terrors of temptation, the powers of the evil one, the vulnerability of your own soul to the tempter’s snares, “Come to Me,” Jesus says, “and I will give you rest.” You who are crippled with depression and anxiety, “Come to Me,” Jesus says, “I will give you rest.” You who have heavy baggage. You’re weighed down and troubled. You’re lugging around regrets, sorrows and lost opportunities, “Come to Me,” Jesus says.

Jesus is calling people who don’t imagine themselves to be doing well spiritually. “Come to Me,” Jesus says, “I will give you rest.” You’re tormented over mistakes you’ve made with your kids. You feel like there’s no going back, “Come to Me,” Jesus says. You’re young, but you feel like you’ve already spoiled your chance for life. You’ve blown it big time. You wonder how there’s any future for you. “Come to Me.” You’re old now and haunted by remorse. You’re single and oppressed by loneliness. You’re married and aching with disappointment. “Come to Me,” Jesus says. You’re sexually broken, “Come to Me,” Jesus says. You’re financially bankrupt, “Come to Me.” You’re addicted to alcohol and drugs. You can’t stop eating or shopping, “Come to Me,” Jesus says. You’re mentally disturbed and confused.

“Come,” Jesus says. “All who are burned out, all who are sick and tired of trying to be good enough—sinners and sufferers alike—come to Me. Anyone, everyone who carries a burden that’s breaking the back of your hope, let Me lift that burden. Let Me carry it for you. Let Me release you from your ball and chains. I will give you rest.” That’s who Jesus is calling. Is He calling you? Does His invitation sound sweet to you today? If so, let’s look at the second question we need to ask of this passage.

2. What does it mean to come to Jesus?

Lots of people surrounded Jesus when He walked this earth. Lots of people followed Jesus. But coming to Jesus is different than just being physically close to Him. There’s a difference between proximity to Jesus and connection to Jesus. Just because they surrounded Jesus doesn’t mean they came to Jesus. What does it mean to come to Jesus?

First, it means to be persuaded of His power and convinced that only He can help you. You’ve got to get there. You’ve got to be persuaded. Only Jesus can help.

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, oh, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want...

[Jesus, Lover of My Soul by Charles Wesley, 1740]

Maybe your faith isn’t that great, and you come to Him more timidly with the leper, and say to Him, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean” (Matthew 8:1-4). You come to Him desperately, like the centurion, trusting in His power (Matthew 8:5-13). “Only speak the word, Lord, and my servant shall be healed.” Whether your faith is small or big, and no matter how much unbelief and fear is mixed in, Jesus graciously accepts and cherishes the most feeble person who comes and says, “Jesus, You have what I need—and only You have it.” To come to Him means to be persuaded of His power and your own desperate need for His help.

Second, it means to move beyond hearing about Jesus and actually dealing with Him—talking to Him like He’s a real Person, relying on Him more desperately than you rely on your own spouse or your best friend. It’s going to Him for comfort and solace, believing

He's real, believing He's alive. It's telling Him your case and pleading for His compassion. It's prevailing against all discouragements or obstacles, like blind Bartimaeus on the side of the road (Mark 10:46-52). While the crowd rebuked him and told him to be silent, he cried out in true faith to Jesus, "O Son of David, have mercy on me!"

You go directly to Him. You talk to Him. What worries me is how many of us know about Jesus, but we've never gone directly to Him. He's a notion in our minds; He's not a Person in our lives. We've got the form of religion and godliness, but we don't have the life. We have all the thoughts and all the doctrines, but do we know Him? Have we gone to Him? Have we talked with Him? Is He becoming dearer to us than the people who surround us, because we know in Him we have a relationship with God that will last forever, that will satisfy us for all eternity? Is Jesus real to us? Have you gone personally to Jesus and told Him of the burden of your sin and of the inability of your heart to obey His law? Have you come to Him and said, "O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, You must take this burden from me—I need You"?

The danger of coming to church and coming to the sacraments is you can start to think that because you're going through these motions, you have a relationship with Jesus. But that's no guarantee at all. In fact, if you come to all these means of grace and never come to Jesus, all the knowledge you've received and all the means of grace you've been exposed to will only add to your damnation in the end. You must come to Him directly. Unburden your soul to Him. Pour forth your complaint. Hide nothing that troubles you. See Him as a living Savior Who listens to your cry, Who responds to Your need. Receive Him as just the kind of Savior your desperate condition requires. He's got all you need.

Keep coming to Him. Come to Him at His Communion Table today. Come to Him in His Word. Come to Him in His church, among His people. Don't just come to church—come to Jesus. We have no less need of Jesus than the blind beggar who sat beside the road begging for his sight. We're lost without Him. He is just as present and just as powerful today as He was 2,000 years ago. He is alive today. He is working today. Through His Holy Spirit He is active today to minister to all who come to Him in faith.

Do you feel your misery? Would you be free from the burden of your sin? Has Jesus given you rest? Are you earnestly seeking Him for the rest your soul desires? Do you understand the meaning of these questions? For if you don't, you have not yet come to Jesus in the way He invites you to come. You have not yet dealt with Him personally. Will you move beyond hearing about Him and knowing truth about Him, to actually coming to Him personally today? You can do that right where you're sitting. He is beckoning you today as if He were physically present in this room. He is here. He's saying, "Do not leave these doors without coming to Me. Do not

leave these doors without dealing with Me. Do not come to this Communion Table without coming to Me today.” You will find in Him a living Savior Who gives you rest.

3. What is implied in this promised rest?

He will give us more than relaxation from toil—He includes refreshment too.

When my son and I finished hiking the Bright Angel Trail, halfway down into the Grand Canyon and back up—13 miles round trip—it wasn’t enough to just take off the backpack and sit down at the end of that journey. We needed refreshment. We needed food. We needed water—lots of it. I needed a hot tub, a pool and a good night’s sleep. We needed refreshment.

This is what the rest of the gospel is like. It doesn’t just put an end to our fruitless strivings. It also provides a sweet refreshment; a joy and peace in believing. Jesus gives us rest in the present tense. Hebrews 4:3 says, “*We who have believed enter that rest.*” There’s a rest from chasing after satisfaction where it’s impossible to find it. We wander from one thing to another, trying to find some good that can satisfy our soul, but we are never able to find it. Now we’ve heard the Word, and we come to the One Who can satisfy our thirst. Jesus says:

*Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant.*

[Isaiah 55:1-3]

The rest Jesus gives ends our vain strivings for satisfaction. It also ends our weary conscience burdened by the guilt and shame of our sins. We come, and we lay our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God. He bears them all and frees us from the accursed load. So now those who have come to Jesus can say, “There is no condemnation for me in Christ (Romans 8:1). I have been reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). I was once an enemy, but now I’m seated at His table. I’m adopted into His family (Ephesians 1:5). He is my Father; I am His child. I give thanks to Him, because though He was angry with me, now His anger has turned away that He might comfort me (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). Behold, God is my salvation (Titus 2:11). I will trust and

not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation (Exodus 15:2). He has lifted the weary burden of the guilt, shame and power of my sin” (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

Yes, sin’s power, too! We don’t get freedom and liberty by making resolutions and fighting in our own strength. Even with the Holy Spirit living within us, we do have to fight for holiness, but the nearer you come to Christ and the closer you depend on His strength and indwelling Spirit, you find that His divine power has given us all things needful for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Sin no longer has dominion over us (Romans 6:14). His grace has now appeared, teaching us to deny worldly lusts and evil passions, living righteous, holy, self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the One Whom our soul desires to appear and liberate us once and for all (Titus 2:11-14). He will bring us from the rest we now enjoy in part into the rest we will enjoy for all eternity without interruption, without diminishment.

There is a rest in the future tense that yet remains for the people of God. *“What we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2). When this war is finally over and the battle has finally been won, at the end of all time we shall enter into a rest that will never end. What will it be like to not have anything unclean to defile or disturb us? What will it be like to have the groanings and the burdens we experience now in this life to be forever in the rear view mirror? What will it be like to never be humiliated by sin again? To have no more gossip or filthy conversations? No more broken commandments? No more hardness of heart?

Right now we sometimes long just to fly with wings like a dove, away from this world and to be at rest. But soon that longing will be answered. We will be living in a world of perfect peace where sin and sinners will no longer trouble our hearts. We’ll rest from all our afflictions. There will be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more pain, no more death (Revelation 21:4). And we will rest from Satan’s temptations. The devil, the enemy of our souls, is always scheming, always busy, always surprising and ensnaring us with his stealth attacks (1 Peter 5:8). He terrifies us with his roaring like Pharaoh, saying to us, “I will pursue you. I will overtake you. I will destroy you.” And he follows us all the way until our last breath. But then he can follow us no further. The moment we breathe our last breath, we will be out of his reach forever, and we will enjoy rest in God’s presence.

Right now, the more we drink of God, the more we thirst. We get glimpses of His glory. Sometimes He brings us on to a mountain top. Sometimes we feast at His banquet table and His banner over us is love (Song of Solomon 2:4). But then we come down from the mountain, back

into this weary world with all its distractions. Our communion with Christ is interrupted so often and it's always imperfect. But a time is coming when we'll never have to come down from the mountain again; when we'll never be separated in our fellowship with the Lord through sin; when we will be forever in His presence—and nothing will ever disrupt that rest. How do you get it? Just look at what Jesus says in verse 28. What does He say about how you get that rest? He says, “*I will give you rest.*” “I, Who have all authority and power to lift the heaviest burden from your soul, will give. I’m not asking anything from you. You don’t need to prove anything to me,” Jesus says. You don’t need to pass an exam. All you have to bring Him is your need, and you need Him a whole lot more than you’ll ever realize. If you had to buy this rest, you couldn’t afford it. If you had to earn it, you’d never deserve it. But Jesus came to give it to you. He paid a high price to purchase that rest. Jesus, the mighty burden-lifter, the Champion greater than Joshua, leads us into God’s promised rest, where we are saved from sin no more.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me!
Underneath me, all around me, is the current of Thy love
Leading onward, leading homeward to Thy glorious rest above!

[From “O The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus” by Samuel Trevor Francis]

Let’s pray.

O Lord Jesus, thank You that You’re not just inviting us to a wish or a dream or a fantasy. You are fully able to give what You promise. We know what it’s like to be restless in this world. The longer we live, the greater the burdens we bear and the more we see how desperately we need what only You can give us. O Lord, I pray for anyone who is right now resting in this life thinking they don’t need You. Would You make them restless until they find their rest in You?

I pray for Your people, with all their various burdens, that we would hear the sweetness of this invitation and recognize the living power of Your presence in our midst, that we would come to You and hide away in Your sweet, satisfying, strong and steadfast love for us. May we meet You and have fellowship with You now at Your Table and be strengthened by Your grace. Amen.

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