

God in the wheat field!

28“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, 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.”

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1At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” 3But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, 4how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5“Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? 6“But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. 7“But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

8“*For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.*”

Last week we considered Jesus pronouncement of woe's on the cities that had seen the most miracles and still rejected Him.

We considered God's sovereign role in election of those who will spend eternity in heaven. And in the same breath as the election Jesus throws the door open wide and says; Come! Anyone can come.

Both truths are valid. God has elected every believer before the foundation of the world. And that coin has a flip side that says; Who-so-ever will, may come. Anyone may come. Believe, and come. Believe if for no other reason, because of the miracles this man did. Believe and come.

If you're a novice preacher, like me, you get to these awesome invitations and you think to yourself, I didn't do that justice. I barely scratched the surface. And knowing that, last week, I decided to visit this 2 times.

Who-so-ever will, may come.

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, 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."

I want to look at some of the key words and try to bring some understanding that goes beyond the surface.

Come to Me dyoo'-teh The word means a definite movement. Come hither. Come away from where you are to a different place. Come, and Follow me.

Immediately, this is an invitation to come from something, to something, and we'll see what that is in vs. 29.

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Come those who are weary. kop-ee-ah'-o. This word describes someone who has toiled to exhaustion. Nothing left. Labored, and the next word, heavy laden, for-tid'-zo, it means a heavy burden.

Ever been on a pack trip with mules. Four legged pickup trucks. And they've got these wooden boxes filled up with stuff to haul to the top of the mountain. That's part of the image. Now picture one and someone has put so much stuff in the boxes that his legs are about to break. That's us under the law.

That's us with the burden of sin. It's too heavy to carry, and those who try, who have subscribed to a religion of laws, over 600 of them, like the jews had, and you're carrying this stuff around and it's crushing you.

Man-made righteousness is exhausting. It is a heavy burden and a weariness. Jesus says, come over to me, and I will give you rest. The rest of release. The crushing load of sin and laws is gone.

29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me

We said the word Come means to come away from something, to something. It has that idea incorporated into the original word.

Come out of Satan's authority, Satan's kingdom and into God's authority, God's kingdom. The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

In verse 29 the word yoke, dzoo-gos, is a double yoke. It's like the double yoke that oxen would have to pull something as a team. You've got a yoke and there's a second party pulling, with you, and it's Jesus.
Take My yoke upon you

So He's saying, come out of the world, Satan's world, with it's crushing, impossible man made religions of laws that you can't perform. Come out of that burden, that yoke that was crushing you to exhaustion, and take my yoke upon you. Be part of an association with someone who can actually carry the load.

learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS

When you take the yoke upon you and Jesus is the one pulling on the other side, He says learn from me. Discovery. What you will learn is that with Jesus pulling with you, and for you, you'll discover that He is gentle, and humble in heart, and there is rest.

You were crushed and exhausted. You came out of that old yoke and took a yoke that also had Jesus pulling. And what used to be impossible is now a joy to do. Your task master is sharing the task. In fact He's doing the pulling and you've discovered a gentle and humble friend who loves you. There is joy and rest, for your soul. Wellness. Pleasant company. Easy work.

“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Yes, there is a yoke. You don't come out of Satan's kingdom and float around as a free agent. You come out of an impossible, exhausting, crushing slavery into a slavery of joy. A humble and gentle friend is pulling the weight for you. His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

We live in a time, I fear, when these words have been almost neutered. The world around us has no sense of God, no sense of any moral requirements, no sense of any absolutes that are always good, always evil, no sense that there is sin against a God who established right and wrong.

This is a hard sell today. Our youth have everything in double quantities. They just look at you with a shocked expression and say, how dare you say there's a God who would put any requirement on me. How dare you try to define something as sin.

Who needs Jesus. We've got computer games and social networking and full bellies and porn. We can self regulate our drug of choice. We aren't hurting anyone. We're not about to yoke ourselves up with these antiquated ideas from a 2,000 year old book. There is no God, we simply evolved. Bugger off with that stuff.

Oh, really? The man who said these things did miracles. He created things out of nothing. He controlled the weather with his voice and His words. He controlled the spiritual unseen world, the demons had to obey Him. He healed lepers. He restored sight to people born blind. He restored hearing to people born deaf. He restored limbs to folks whose limbs were useless nubs. He walked on water. He was murdered, and rose from the dead. There were witnesses. Reliable people. They wrote it down. You should listen to Him.

This offer to come out of this world and into the Kingdom of God, to come unto Jesus, is still open. Still valid. But you can't have both. You turn your back on this world in order to take up His yoke.

1At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

Chapter 12 is a turning point in Jesus ministry. After this chapter it's all downhill for Jesus as the scribes and pharisees, the leaders of Israel will plot to destroy Him. It's just a matter of time. God's time, not theirs.

Here we get a window into the system of man made legalistic religion that had placed an impossible, unbearable burden on the people. When Jesus said, *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

The religion of Israel was not Bible based. What they did was take one command, the Sabbath, and build a labyrinth of endless laws and restrictions based in their traditions, not God's written law, and bind the people up with an impossible burden.

Bottom line was in order to "keep" the sabbath with all of their restrictions would be like lacing yourself into a strait jacket and sitting in a chair looking straight ahead for the next 24 hours. It was not a rest from labor, it had become a weekly torture session.

You couldn't travel, you couldn't eat anything bigger than an olive. It just goes on and on to the point of rediculous. Thus the real purpose of the sabbath was lost. A day to cease from your labors and worship God. It had been so encumbered with restrictions that it became a day of torture and gloom. An unbearable burden.

1At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

Nothing in that scenario was forbidden by God's word in the old Testament. In fact in Deuteronomy 23:25 God had made a provision for His people out of love and necessity;

If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain.

If you're hungry, you can be in someone else's grain field, and it's OK to make a meal from their grain. You can't take a tractor in their field and harvest their grain, but you can pick enough to satisfy your hunger. The same applied to fruits and other kinds of food. You don't harvest their field. It's still theirs. But it's OK to satisfy your hunger.

So, if you need to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem you would take some provisions but you would also stop in other people's fields and make a meal from their produce as you go. God did that for His people so they could move from place to place.

It also instills in people to hold onto their possessions more loosely than what you and I do. God owns those fields. He allows the farmer to harvest a crop and make a living, but He also provides food for the poor from the same field.

I remember so well driving through orange groves with my Dad as a child on the way from Southern California to the bay area to see his family. We'd be out on Hwy 126 on our way to Ventura and going through row after row of these beautiful oranges and I'd think, what would it hurt for a kid to just pick one of those oranges and eat it. But my parents would warn us to never do that.

I haven't changed much I guess. Riding with Tina up above Hood River Oregon going through orchard after orchard of pear trees, after the harvest, but there were still some lovely pears on those trees. Perhaps they weren't ripe in time for the harvest? It was killing me to not stop and pick one to eat. I like God's provision, although I'd have a hard case to convince anyone I was really hungry.

That was how God had set up His society. Food for the poor and the wayfaring. Take enough to have a meal. Leave the rest. What a beautiful system.

2But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

The pharisees and scribes had destroyed the beauty of what God had put

in place for His people with 1000's of nit picky rules. Picking the heads of grain constituted work according to their traditions. If you rubbed them together in your hands to get the grain out, that was work. If you threw them in the air to separate the husks that was winnowing, and thus work, and on and on like that.

According to their traditions you couldn't travel more than 3,000 steps from your home or it was work, breaking the sabbath. So just being in the grainfields was questionable. Did you walk more than 3,000 steps since the sabbath began to get there? Dealbreaker. Sabbath breaker. Sinner.

I guess it was OK for the finger pointers to travel more than 3,000 steps in order to indict Jesus and His disciples. Seems to have been OK for them, but not for Jesus. Such is legalism. It is a crushing system. Jesus and His disciples had broken no law of God, only the traditions of men.

Jesus is going to respond with a little 3 point sermon, and when He's finished with them, they are going to be in a corner where the only way out is to kill Jesus.

3But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, 4how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

He starts right in on them; *Have you not read . . .*

We need to stop right here and talk about something. What defines our religion, today. What is our source book? Jesus, over and over, in these challenges and discussions returns to one thing, and one thing only. The written revelation of God. The inspired Word of God.

Christians have done a lot of arguing with each other down through the centuries, and it's going on today. There are issues that are splitting the church, as we speak. It's normal in the area of religion to have questions and disagreements about how things are done.

And according to the book, the noble way to resolve differences of opinion is to consult this book. Right. Acts 17:11 *Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

It's absolutely OK to have the discussion. And it's noble to go to the book to get the answers.

In our time and context the church is having a discussion about homosexuality, isn't it. Do we recognize gays who are in committed relationships and who claim they are christians no different than you or me?

That's an issue and very large churches with lots and lots of money involved are splitting themselves off from what the church has held for centuries. Who's right? Who's wrong? Well, to answer that we need to do just exactly what Jesus did here for us as our example. Have you not read? What does the book say?

That will be our model as long as you tolerate me as your pastor. The answers are all right here in this book. Not just to that problem, but to every human problem. This book is our source. That's what Jesus did, and that's what we will do. It is not difficult to understand. There is clarity for any honest seeker.

And so Jesus is going to spank these pharisees right out of the gate. *Have ye not read . . . ??* That was an insult. Of course they read. It's their profession to read and talk this stuff into oblivion. Have you not read?? Who do you think you're talking to country boy?? We're the scribes and the pharisees. Insult received. Rebuke received.

What's fascinating though is that Jesus doesn't take them to Deuteronomy 23 and point out the obvious. He's way way past them here. He takes them to an obscure story about David, when Saul was chasing him, trying to murder him.

David, God's chosen servant. Saul, deposed by God, but still physically

on the throne. David and his men are running for their lives, and they are in God's perfect will and provision while they're doing that. David is God's elect. God's choice for king.

"Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, 4how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

Jesus takes His accusers to 1Samuel 21. David is being chased and he and his men are weak with hunger. Not good. They come to Nob, where the tabernacle was. Remember the temple and Jerusalem as the center point of the Jewish religion isn't established yet. The tabernacle is at Nob.

And the service of the tabernacle prescribes that loaves of bread be made as showbread and displayed for 7 days, when new ones will be made, and after that, the ones that were replaced can be eaten by the priests.

David comes into the tabernacle, starved, and his men also, and the only food available is that bread. And Ahimelech, the priest, knowing that God is being glorified by David's flight, takes that bread, and gives it to David and his men.

Technically a flaw, right. It's only supposed to be eaten by the priests. But Jesus picks this story because sometimes the spirit of the law trumps the letter of the law. What does God care about? Bread? Or David and his men?

God doesn't care about display bread. In fact when we get there we can ask Him, did you make that whole deal with the bread up so that this one time, in great need, David could have a meal? Jesus picks a story where the purpose behind the law, to honor God and sustain men, is glorified by this priest who technically broke the law.

5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?

Second point of Jesus sermon begins like the first. *Or have you not read . . . Another spanking for the experts in the law that had missed the whole point. that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent*

The Sabbath was a work day for the priests. They've got twice as much work to do in order to enable the people to come together and worship. There was provision in the law for the breaking of the law by these, because it was necessary for the benefit of the rest of the people, and for the worship of God. No brainer.

Again, the bottom line spirit and intent of the law trumps the letter. No one could worship if God hadn't made provision for the priests to break the law.

6 "*But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.*

Jesus is brutally showing these nit picking legalists that there is something that trumps the mechanical ritual. There's something beyond the rote of mechanical religion.

Please note that He said that in a wheat field. Nothing was there. Except Jesus and His disciples.

Something greater than the temple is here? What does that mean? Well, if you're the pharisees and the scribes, the temple is the focal point of everything. It is the beginning and the end. Forget about God, it was the religious ritual of the temple that mattered. They'd forgotten why?

So, standing in a wheat field with Jesus, let's weigh the options. Is the wheat more important than the temple? No. So what exactly is this man claiming. He's claiming that HE trumps their whole religion. Everything they are. Everything they know. Their universe. Their world view. He just said He's more important than the most important thing their tiny, rigid, closed minds could imagine.

Only one thing could trump the temple. God Himself. They understood

His claim.

7“*But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.*

Point 3 of His sermon. God is interested in the heart, not the ritual.

Jesus again goes to scripture. Again He spans them. *if you had known what this means* You idiots. You morons. You blind leading the blind.

He didn't say any of those things. I added them. He didn't need to say that. His sarcasm is complete. If you experts knew the basics . . . He just buckled them at the knees with that one. If you had known what this means . . . ‘*I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE*

Here He takes them to Hosea 6:6 I'll start at vs. 5 for context.

5Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth. 6For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

God doesn't care about your ritual. He hates it. He wants you. He doesn't care about your burnt offerings. He hates them. He wants a personal intimate relationship, from the heart. Loyalty and intimate knowing. A love relationship. No married person accepts any less. How much **more** our relationship with our God!

The scribes and pharisees had erred because their religion was surface do's and don't's. A love relationship with God was the farthest thing from their mind. Ritual. Legalism. Laws. Defining laws *waaaayyyyy* past what God intended. Building a giant mountain of legalistic traditions. Dumping that load on the people of Israel.

That power game and ritual had become their god. They were a million light years from the God they claimed to be honoring. They had sacrificed Him a long time ago and replaced Him with their traditions and their rituals and their legalism.

*Isa. 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD,
You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the instruction of our God,
You people of Gomorrah.*

*11“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?”
Says the LORD.
“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
And the fat of fed cattle;
And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.*

*12“When you come to appear before Me,
Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?*

*13“Bring your worthless offerings no longer,
Incense is an abomination to Me.
New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.*

*14“I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts,
They have become a burden to Me;
I am weary of bearing them.*

*15“So when you spread out your hands in prayer,
I will hide My eyes from you;
Yes, even though you multiply prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are covered with blood.*

*16“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.
Cease to do evil,*

*17Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Reprove the ruthless,
Defend the orphan,
Plead for the widow.*

*18 “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.*

What's odd is I'm sure every one of them could quote Isaiah 1:11 - 18 by heart. God came to earth to reason with them. They're going to have none of it. They've already made up their minds to keep their scarlet, crimson sins. There will be no reasoning with Jesus.

Well, Jesus has a closing point in His sermon to them and it's going to devastate them.

8 “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

There's only two things you can make of what Jesus just said. I can't put it any better than to quote C. S. Lewis.

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

This man is either a demon possessed lunatic, or He's God. The scribes and pharisees and rulers of Israel understood His claim perfectly. They decided He was a deranged demon possessed lunatic that needed to be destroyed.

That decision was based right here. “*For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.*” I own the Sabbath. I have authority over the Sabbath. I created the Sabbath. It's mine.

How do you come up with the wrong choice. When you add in the evidence. The miracles. All of the things He did that no human has ever done before or since. Massive evidence and they go with the demon possessed lunatic explanation.

We can only answer that by defaulting back to what He said last week. Matt. 11:25 *At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26"Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight....*

The evidence is overwhelming. The only way you can wind up at the lunatic demon possessed explanation is that God has hidden the obvious because you are already in a state of judgement. God is in your midst, and you think He's the devil. Woe.

What's here for us this morning. Besides falling on our faces and worshipping God who walked among men and became hungry and picked heads of wheat for a meal. Let us not miss that. God was in that wheat field. He is Lord of the Sabbath, and everything else in the universe. It's all His. We need to fall down and worship Him.

And we need to do that in the way that Jesus describes here. Not in religious ritual. But in giving our hearts wholly to Him. He desires loyalty, love, devotion, a one on one friendship relationship. Not ritual. Not jumping through legalistic hoops. If that's where our hearts are, He will take our crimson sin and make it white as wool.

Secondly, we go to the book for our answers, just like Jesus did.

We are just like these pharisees and scribes. We strut around proudly proclaiming that we're the people of the book, but that's what they did. They were proud that they *got it*, and that they would never have

murdered the prophets like their fathers did. Not us. And then they murdered Jesus.

And we're infected with this same disease. The truth is that in our fallen condition we are prone to error.

Yes, the book is still the answer, but we need to approach it with humility, recognizing we've got the same problems working against us that the pharisees and scribes did. We can get blindsided and miss the forest because of the trees. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. Thy word is truth.

Third, the offer is open. Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. That offer is still wide open today. The man in the wheat field that does the miracles and claims to be God, says Come!