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Sermon Notes

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Come Into Christ's Rest

Matthew 11:28-30

I. A Desperate Need for Christ's Peace

- Evidence all over the world:
- We see it in the streets of Baghdad, where U.S. Marines will encounter stiffening resistance from the Republican Guard units
- We see it in the streets of New York, Paris, Barcelona, Sydney, and many other cities where protesters with angry twisted faces and flag-burning hatred chant slogans
- We see it much more in the slavery to sin and death that these events clearly represent
- Book of Revelation's mysterious statement:

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Revelation 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

- The Sea represents the turbulence of the nations, churning like a massive frothy ocean

Isaiah 57:20-21 "But the wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."

Isaiah 17:12 Oh, the raging of many nations-- they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples-- they roar like the roaring of great waters!

- BUT in the fullness of time, God came near to us through His Son... and His Son dwelt with us
- Now He commands us to return to Him... to draw close, to enter right into His presence!!

II. Whom the King Invites: Burdened Sinners (vs. 28)

A. Our Inviting King

vs. 28-30 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon me 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.”*

B. Who Is Invited? Weary, Heavy-Laden Sinners

“Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Jesus ready stands to save you... full of pity, love and power!!”

Real burden is SIN

- a. sin is a crushing burden every day... a grievous taskmaster, whipping us with its demands
- b. even greater is the crushing burden of impending wrath of God
 - i) meticulous accounting on judgment day
 - ii) burdened, guilty conscience
 - iii) sense of doom and fear of God’s wrath

Hebrews 10:27 ...a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

So, whom does the King invite? Such people as are crushed under the burden of their sins... of a guilty conscience, or fear of wrath and judgment from God; such people as are weary of trying man-made religion and self-help efforts

D. To What are Sinners Invited?

“Come to ME, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest!!”

1. Come to Christ!! Believe in Him
2. Christ’s death: full atonement for sins
3. Christ’s righteousness: full acceptability before God on Judgment Day

Simple faith... simple trust in Christ alone!! Come to Christ!!!

III. What the King Commands: Submit to My Yoke

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.”

A. Take My Yoke Upon You

1. What is a yoke?

- a. agricultural: wooden crossbar structure which enables oxen or other animals to pull a load or plow a field
- b. metaphorical: authority of a king or master over a subject or slave
 - i) used of Egyptians domination of Israelite slaves

Exodus 6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.'

- ii) used of Solomon's harsh treatment of people in building many buildings

[Representatives of people speaking to Rehoboam about his father Solomon] ***1 Kings 12:4 "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."***

- iii) used especially of foreign kings' domination of Israel

[Midian] ***Isaiah 9:4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.***

[Nebuchadnezzar] ***Jeremiah 27:2, 4-8 This is what the LORD said to me: "Make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on your neck.***

2. What is Christ's yoke?

- a. some interpreters: Christ's rule in religion
- b. my interpretation: Christ's rule as King of the universe, and of your life specifically

So the yoke represents Christ's kingly authority... He is the King of the Kingdom of heaven

To take Christ's yoke upon you means to submit totally to His rule in your life!!

B. Bowing the Neck Under Christ's Yoke

Spurgeon: "Observe, dear friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ does lay a yoke and a burden upon his followers. He uses these words that none may presume to enter His service without due consideration. Religion is not a matter for the trifling. The service of the meek and lowly Christ is no child's play. There is a yoke that is to be borne by all His disciples, and the neck of self-will must be bent low to receive it. There

is a burden to be carried for Christ, and all the strength that God gives us must be used for His glory and honor." ["Christ's Yoke and Burden," #2832; Sept. 2, 1886]

1. Submitting to Christ's Lordship

Consistent message: **"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."**

Meaning: throw down your weapons of rebellion and come back under my authority!! Stop fighting my reign, stopping resisting my sovereignty over the world and over your life. Come back to the Kingdom and allow me to be your personal King!!

2. Learning from Christ: "Learn from me"

- a. same root word as "disciple"... lit. "Be my disciple"
- b. we must have instruction... we perish from lack of wisdom and from a famine of the word
- c. let me instruct you daily about life, God, and everything
- d. learn from my example... I live a perfect life in submission to my Father
- e. learn from my teachings... I give perfect instruction to sustain the weary

C. How does Christ describe His yoke?

vs. 30 "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

1. Surprising... perhaps even shocking!!
 - a. Christ demands total and perfect obedience
 - b. no room for rebellion made... although all sin is covered
 - c. no "time off" from His kingdom

Matthew 10:37-38 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

- d. demands highest allegiance of love above all others
- e. demands that we be willing to live every moment only for His will
- f. demands that we be willing to die for Him every day to advance His Kingdom

Romans 8:36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

How can anyone who demands such absolute total commitment call His yoke easy and His burden light?

2. Not true for the unconverted!!!

Spurgeon: "Some of you would not find Christ's yoke easy or his burden light. That is the very last thing you would find them to be in your present condition; but you would find his yoke heavy and his burden impossible for you to bear. Some of you are mere worldlings, 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;' it may be that some of you are self-righteous, and proud of what should be your shame. In any case, you are unregenerate, and our text would not be true of you in your unconverted state."

Key: You must follow Christ's order!!

First) Come to me and let me give you rest

Second) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me

D. Why is Christ's yoke easy and His burden light?

1. Because of His perfect nature
2. Because of His perfected work
3. Because of the simplicity of being a servant
4. Because of the perfection of Christ's commands
5. Because of the hopefulness of a life well-invested under His yoke
6. Because of the powerful assistance He gives in bearing His yoke
7. Because of the sweetness of the love relationship with Christ

1. Because of His perfect nature

vs. 29 "I am gentle and humble in heart"

- a. if Christ were a raging tyrant, who loves to make us suffer, His omnipotent yoke would crush us under its weight
- b. the Kingdom of God is good news because God is such a good King

- c. Christ's self description means everything: His nature is perfect... He is gentle with us, patient, not pressing us harder than He enables us to go
- d. Christ is also perfectly humble: not Lording it over us, but serving us... washing our smelly feet, cleaning our stinking sin messes, dying on the cross; loving us with a perfect humility
- e. Christ is also a perfect example of humble submission to authority, because He perfectly submitted to every command of His Father

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart...”

- f. Christ did not buck or bridle against the yoke His Father placed on Him... He will teach us to be gentle and quiet under His yoke!!

2. Because of His perfected work

- a. Christ has already borne the heaviest yoke... the burden of our sins and penalty
- b. this is the greatest humility in history, and the heaviest load

Philippians 2:6-8 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- c. Christ has already taken up our heaviest burden... the burden He lays on us is far easier

3. Because of the simplicity of being a servant

- a. a servant's life is quite simple if his master is a good master
- b. simply do what the master tells you to do!! No worries about food, clothing, shelter... just simple obedience!
- c. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light because He has promised to care for all our needs

4. Because of the perfection of Christ's commands

- a. Christ's yoke is the way He rules our lives... the direction He gives; when He pulls us left, we must go left; when He pulls us right, we must go right
- b. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light because His commands are always perfect!! What He forbids is evil, harmful and destructive to us. What He commands is good, fruitful, and healthy for us.

1 John 5:3 "His commands are not burdensome"

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. 11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

- c. When He commands us to flee lust, He is protecting us from the heartbreak of a broken marriage. Which is a greater burden... to walk in holiness under Christ's yoke, or to pick up the pieces of a broken life?

5. Because of the hopefulness of a life well-invested under His yoke

- a. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light because, the whole time we walk under His rule, we know we are storing up treasure in heaven.
- b. Christ's yoke frees us from the barrenness and hopelessness of investing your life in nothing... of seeing all you have done blown away like dust in the wind
- c. as we walk under His yoke, we are guided to maximum fruitfulness, living in ever-increasing hopefulness of the day when He will say "Well done, you good and faithful servant!"
- d. as we submit to His yoke as our King, we are helping build His eternal kingdom... other souls are being saved, other lives being transformed... we see it and rejoice. There is no better life than one under the yoke of Christ

6. Because of the powerful assistance He gives in bearing His yoke

- a. Christ said the Scribes and Pharisees

Matthew 23:4 "Tie up heavy loads and put them on men's back's, but they themselves will not lift a finger to move them."

- b. Christ is so different!! His yoke is easy and His burden is light because He Himself gets inside you and gives you strength from within to lift whatever He places on you
- c. Christ has already lived it out... perfectly.

Hebrews 13:21 ...May God equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Augustine: "Give what you command and command what you will."

- d. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light because He supernaturally gives you the strength and will to do everything He commands

7. Because of the sweetness of the love relationship with Christ

- a. love for God is to obey His commands
- b. the sweetness of our love for Christ and His love for us makes bending our necks to His yoke and bearing His burden a small and light thing

Genesis 29:20 So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

IV. What the King Promises: Rest for Your Souls

A. The Restlessness of Sin

1. Satan's Restlessness

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

Matthew 12:43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

Satan is a truly restless being... waiting only for the end of history when He will be crushed and will exist in eternal torment in the Lake of Fire.

2. Entering Satan's Rebellion Against the King

- a. Satan threw off the yoke of God's rule
- b. Satan enticed Adam also to throw off the yoke of God's rule
- c. we thus entered Satan's rebellion, and also entered Satan's restlessness

3. No Rest for the Wicked

- a. constant experience of restlessness

world history: replete with utter restlessness

On brink of war with Iraq... WWI called "The war to end all wars"

Restlessness of the nations comes from individual restlessness of human hearts

Isaiah 57:20-21 "But the wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."

Isaiah 17:12 Oh, the raging of many nations-- they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples-- they roar like the roaring of great waters!

true peace cannot be counterfeited

Satanic counterfeits: alcohol, drugs, pleasure, favorable circumstances

Proliferation of entertainment, sports, drugs... a record of restlessness, discontent

- b. deeper: sense that "It is NOT well with my soul"... impending wrath of God

B. Peace With God

1. Positional rest... God at peace with you, you at peace with Him

- a. justification by faith

Romans 5:1 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hebrews 4:3 Now we who have believed enter [God's] rest

Your soul's long journey is over at last!! You have found your final resting place!!

- b. soul's journey over

- i) Old Testament: Israel's journeying to the Promised Land... a quest for rest

God seeks rest for Himself WITH His people

Numbers 10:12 Then the Israelites set out from the Desert of Sinai and traveled from place to place until the cloud came to rest in the Desert of Paran.

Numbers 10:33 So they set out from the mountain of the LORD and traveled for three days. The ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest.

Deuteronomy 12:10 But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.

This also represents the whole of redemptive history... as God leads His people on a long march through many dangers, toils, snares, to find rest at last

Christ is the rest His people seek... He is the Promised Land!!

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon me and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. “

Illus. Settlers long journey west... finally finding rest in their new estate... perhaps a beautiful, fertile valley in Wyoming where their crops and livestock can flourish. Who can say the feeling of relief and tears when they see it, after all the journey... 2000 miles over the roughest terrain imaginable; crossing raging rivers, when the family dog was swept downstream; cresting one mountain ridge, only to see twenty more mountain ranges yet to go; losing members of the party to disease, or to Indian attack; at last, they have come to rest where they will flourish

So it is in your life... wandering through the world, searching for something. You never realized that you were searching for God, for rest in Him. You were searching for your true home, your native country, your creator and the lover of your soul.

Augustine: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and the heart of man is restless till it finds its rest in you.”

2. Halt from working for your salvation

- a. we were toiling under the yoke of the Law
- b. all our days circumscribed by regulations: Thou shalt, thou shalt not

- c. Christ's rest frees us forever from works

Hebrews 4:10 anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

C. Peace of God

Philippians 4:6-7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1. Peace With God is Permanent!!

- a. It comes through simple faith in Christ
- b. It can never be taken away through sin or circumstances
- c. we are adopted into God's family... He loves us and is forever our Father

2. The Peace OF God

- a. freedom from a guilty, accusing conscience
- b. freedom from anxiety: anxiety about finances, health, the future, war, disease, famine, disaster

Why? Because our gentle loving savior is also a mighty King who rules all things!!

- c. regular times of refreshment and renewal

Why? Because Christ knows how weak we are, and how much we need to be refreshed!

Mark 6:31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

- d. stability and perspective during life's trials

Why? Because it is well with our souls, and we have a good shepherd who cares for us!

- e. peaceful relationships with others

Why? Because all our needs are met and we can live to serve others!

We constantly have peace with God through faith in Christ

We can experience the peace of God as we obey His commands, put sin to death, and commit our troubles to Him in prayer

This is what our Good Shepherd promises us! Present experiences of rest for our souls

D. Future Eternal Rest: Heaven

1. The fulfillment of the Sabbath: entering God's rest

Exodus 20:8-11 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Hebrews 4:9-11 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Just as God rested from His works after creation, so we will someday enter His eternal Sabbath rest in heaven

Faith in Christ is the Sabbath rest for our souls... and it will have a perfect fulfillment in heaven

Isaiah 57:1-2 The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

In heaven, we shall be in perfect fellowship with our heavenly Father, and nothing shall make us afraid; our labors shall have ceased; we shall enter into God's soul-rest

V. Application

1. Come to Christ the Gentle King

- a. allow Christ's gentleness to overcome your fears
- b. allow Christ's humility to conquer your pride
- c. trust completely in Christ's death for your salvation

2. Submit Completely to Christ's Yoke

1. Because of His perfect nature
2. Because of His perfected work
3. Because of the simplicity of being a servant
4. Because of the perfection of Christ's commands
5. Because of the hopefulness of a life well-invested under His yoke
6. Because of the powerful assistance He gives in bearing His yoke
7. Because of the sweetness of the love relationship with Christ

Don't bridle against the fact that you now have a King who is the rightful ruler of your every moment

Satan lies to us and promises us self-rule, autonomy, FREEDOM

We Americans love our freedom, but the fact is that the only true freedom in the universe is to bow our necks to Christ the King. If we don't we are merely slaves of another kind... slaves to the cruelest master in history: sin

Romans 6:20-23 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. Enter Completely into Christ's Rest

- a. understand Peace with God... a state of being at rest in the family of God
- b. understand the Peace of God... a moment-by-moment peace in all circumstances
- c. understand Eternal Peace in God's presence... heaven itself