

Matthew 11:20-30 □ □

SMAS 6pm

(14-10-12)

To put this passage in context: Jesus has just been speaking about how children are. He says that they often argue and can't agree but that we can learn a lot from them. Sometimes they understand things better and in fact Jesus says to really know and understand Him we must be like children - this is because we mustn't think we know everything. He knows better, He knows what's best for us.

So in the fashion of being a bit like a parent who knows what is good for their child He does a good telling off session. It's a little unusual to find the word woe on the lips of Jesus, the word means judgment, but it also includes pity and sorrow. He's saying how tragic it is that these cities treat so lightly the opportunities they have had to repent and believe having seen the miracles He has performed there.

Capernaum has had the great privilege of not only having had Jesus living there for a while but Him having witnessed 5 out the 10 miracles recorded in Matthew 8–9 performed there. The Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, and the godless cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, would have repented had they seen them!

Jesus then goes on to say that He's thankful that those who come like little children have had full knowledge of him revealed to them by God. These verses indicate both the sovereignty of the Father and the responsibility of the sinner.

So we get to the last part of the reading and Jesus says 'Come'. Part of this coming is for us to see and learn that we may get to know Him. But a bigger part of this coming and taking on His yoke is in our not 'doing' what the Pharisees were burdening people with.

The Pharisees had 600+ rules/regulations that they lived by & expected others to follow. Jesus criticised them for the unrealistic burden they imposed upon people.

He says that what matters in this life is knowing Him and allowing Him to show us God the Father. So, He says, if you have lots of worries and cares and you are feeling really tired then come to me. I understand your worries and I will give you the rest you need. Jesus isn't calling to himself those who feel fit and able to follow a religious life full of rules. He is calling the weary and the burdened.

A rest that will help us in our responsibilities and lives as Christian disciples?- not the sort of rest where we put our feet up and no longer have burdens.

As Christian disciples we never retire from the active duty of being a Christian disciple. Jesus is wanting to give us a type of rest that is more like ongoing relief. More like help.

Some think the image of a yoke came easily to Jesus who may have made yokes for oxen as a carpenter. He would have known how a well-fitting yoke made it much easier for the two oxen joined together to do their work.

A yoke was designed to make carrying a load easier. Jesus is calling people to carry his load and learn from him. He is gentle and humble, not harsh and arrogant. He's not saying that following him involves no responsibilities, no load. It's about where you start from. Because the Pharisees thought that they could please God by keeping over 600 rules they burdened themselves trying to do this. Consequently their burden was always heavy.

Jesus says walk with me. Learn from me. And in learning from me you will find rest, relief. We learn from him by being in His presence not by genning up on rules.

A joke

A lady died and entered Heaven's pearly gates.

Where am I she said, is this heaven? Did I really make it to heaven? St Peter replies 'Yes madam you did this is heaven'.

What do I have to do to get in she asks?

Well ma'am all you have to do is spell a word St Peter tells her What word?

It doesn't really matter madam, you pick the word.

*In that case I guess it would be appropriate to I spell the word LOVE. Very good madam you may enter, but would you do me a favour?
What do you want? Would you sit here and watch the gates while I go to the bathroom? Yes, of course, I'll do that.□*

A few minutes later she saw a man walking up the path towards the pearly gates. She realized as he got nearer it was her husband of some 40 years.

Why, Henry, what are you doing here? Well Gladys he says, when I left your funeral I was distraught, and didn't know what I'd do without you. I was beside myself and wasn't paying attention to my driving and ran head on into an on-coming lorry, and here I am to spend the rest of eternity with you. What do I have to do to get in? Oh, that's simple she said, just spell a word. What word? Czechoslovakia

This reflects a common misunderstanding that people enter heaven because of something they've achieved, like being very good. Few people would consider themselves as wicked. Most would think of themselves as 'good', and be under the impression that all good people go to heaven.

But it's more about who you know. Coming to know Christ and what He does for us. Learning from him by being in His presence. To do that we need to take time out from our busy lives to spend time with Him. I once did a family talk about this where I showed some motorway service station signs which serve as good reminders of this. Perhaps, if you can remember them they might help you to take that time to be yoked up with Jesus.

Fuel-pump

'keep praying to be filled with HS to be powered-up.'

Food-sign

'feed on word of God.'

Bed-sign

'rest in God, not so busy we've no time to rest in God's love.'

So often we are foolish and find we can't be like little children and take Him at His word. It can't

be as simple as taking time out to be with Jesus. Surely, we always seem to think, we have to do something - be good, achieve something. We don't Jesus has done it for us!

Sadly many throw away the light yoke that Jesus offers us. Jesus said that, on the day of judgment many will call him 'Lord' and point to deeds done in his name, but Jesus will say that he never knew them.

Resting in Him, trusting in Him, getting to know Him and the amazing love and comfort He offers is what we need. Being with Him.

The evangelist Gypsy Smith told the story of a group of gypsies who were forced to cross a swollen stream, a great number of men were drowned. One young man made a desperate attempt to save his mother who kept clinging to him. Several times he pushed her away, saying, "Let go, Mother, and I can save you." But she would not heed him and was lost. At the funeral, the son stood by his mother's grave and said over and over, "How hard I tried to save you, Mother, but you wouldn't let me!" These are the tragic words that we shall hear Jesus Christ say to many in eternity one day, "How hard I tried to save you, but you wouldn't let me. Your will was the great hindrance."

Jesus yoke is easy and burden light because he's done the hard part for us in paying for our sins on the cross. We can't add to that. We don't need to keep trying to be good by ourselves, we don't need to live up to lots of laws and regulations but accept His free gift. Most importantly that we get to know Him so well that He becomes our first port of call when we are burdened rather than the last when all else fails.