Finding Rest in Jesus

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At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 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 you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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" (Matthew 11:25-30).

1. My First Scripture

Matthew 11:28 is one of the most beloved verses in the Bible. It is comforting for those who feel burdened and need rest. Matthew 11:28 had a big influence on me coming to Christ. When I was in high school, I studied very hard in the school library. I was often the last student leaving the library for home in the late evening. I felt tired quite often.

At the time, I heard a voice, "***Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*** Of course, I did not know what the scripture' meaning was, but Jesus' invitation was good news to me.

2. I Will Give You Rest

In this scripture, who are invited by Jesus? There are two groups of people. The first group are those who worked hard and felt exhausted. At the time, the common people labored under Roman occupation. They often needed physical rest. The second group are those who are burdened with the effort to obey the law. According to the Talmud, there are 613 Commandments in the Torah; 248 Commandments are do's and 365 are don'ts. For the Israelites, the law itself was not burdensome because they believed that the law was the delight (Psalm 119). However, the interpretation and practice of the law taught by the Pharisees placed a heavy burden on the Israelites.

Jesus promises to give rest to all those laboring under harsh religious and political systems. What does Jesus mean by giving rest? Rest in Greek is "*anapauw*," that means to "permit one to cease from any labor in order to

recover and collect his or her strength." However, the deeper meaning of rest can be found in the Old Testament.

In Exodus 33:3, God says to Moses, "***Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way***." When the Israelites heard what God had said, they were so distressed and began to mourn.

At the entrance of the tent Moses said to the Lord, "***You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me." "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways… and continue to find favor with me. Remember that this nation is your people.***" Moses was saying that God should go with them if God loved His people.

In Exodus 33:14, God says to Moses, "***My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest***." God promises Moses that on the journey of Exodus, God will be with the Israelites and God would give Moses rest. "Rest" literally means "make quiet." God was saying that God would take care of His people and guide them. Moses did not have to worry about what to do when the Israelites were in danger or in crisis. As God promised to Moses, God was with them always and took care of them until they entered the promised land.

When Jesus said, "***I will give you rest***," he meant much more than the literal meaning of the word "rest" as we saw in the story of Exodus. "Rest" in Matthew chapter 11 connotes "the whole saving work of Jesus." What was Jesus' saving work? When the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus, "***Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another***?" Jesus answered, "***Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleaned, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.***" Jesus is saying that through Jesus many experienced restoration, healing, hope, and encouragement.

Jesus' invitation comes to all human beings who are weary, sick, lonely, sad, and living with all kinds of problems in life. Jesus is saying in today's passage that if we would come to him, Jesus would meet our needs by giving us comfort, peace, freedom, forgiveness, healing, resurrection, salvation, and many other blessings.

3. When Our Expectations are not Met

Yet in our lives, we experience that Jesus often does not give us exactly what we want. John the Baptist would be a good example of this.

John was killed while he was in jail. The disciples of John were disappointed when John was killed. They expected that Jesus would help get John released from jail. The Bible does not tell us why Jesus did not do anything for John. But that does not mean that Jesus did not care about John.

In Romans 8:28, Paul says, "***We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose***." Paul is convinced that for those who are called according to God's purpose, all things will work together for good. If we believe that God has called us for His purpose, we know that God works behind the scenes and leads and guides us in the right direction. If we trust the Lord, there is nothing we need to worry about or be disappointed in even when things don't go the way we wish.

4. Jesus's Yoke is Easy

Jesus invites us not only to rest but also to be his disciples. In verse 29 & 30, Jesus says, "***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****."*

The yoke was a symbol of burden bearing. Yokes were laid on the necks and shoulders of oxen. But the term yoke was also used metaphorically with positive connotations. A yoke was a difficult but joyous task.

What is the yoke Jesus offers? Jesus offers for us to take his yoke that gives peace, forgiveness, justice, mercy, and rest. Following Jesus means we join in Jesus' ministry as his disciples and work with Jesus for God's kingdom. Following Jesus as his disciples is not a yoke at all but an honor and privilege. Does everyone think so? Maybe not.

5. Jesus Prays for His People

In verse 25 and the following, Jesus prays and thanks God because the Lord has "***hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and has revealed them to infants****."* The term "the wise and the intelligent" here would refer to any who reject Jesus and his messages like the scribes and Pharisees. On the other hand, "infants" would refer to those who listen to Jesus' teaching and follow him. These people trust in the Lord and depend on him.

These people are like a baby sleeping in the arms of the parents or grandparents. The baby does not know what is happening around the baby

and does not need to worry about anything. The baby's parents and grandparents would take care of everything for the baby.

6. Conclusion

Do we find ourselves anxious or troubled this morning? Perhaps we might be looking for the rest that Jesus is offering, his comfort, healing, hope, encouragement, forgiveness, salvation, joy and happiness. This year brings with it a lot of reasons to feel anxious or troubled. It is a difficult time for every one of us. Some would look for relief in other things like alcohol, food, or substance abuse. However, in Matthew chapter 11, Jesus invites us to bring such issues to him. When we bring our burdens to Jesus, we will find the rest we need in our almighty and everlasting Lord.

7. Application

The four Gospels tell us that Jesus walked every day in total dependence on God and reminds us that we always can rely on God in every situation, even when we feel alone, need comfort, healing, help, and guidance.

I have a friend who owns a construction business and manages several construction projects at the same time. Every project comes with a list of problems and issues that have to be dealt with every day.

I wondered how he might deal with so many problems. He says he gets up every morning and listens to what the Lord has to say and follows that direction. If he had to manage the business by himself, he would have given up long before. But God's guidance allows him to be just the manager of God's business and follow God's direction.

When we reflect on our lives, we are reminded that we are all part of God's business and God's greater plan. At times we can feel anxious or troubled as we go through our life journey.

Jesus invites us this morning. "***Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*** If we come to Jesus, we will find the rest, comfort, peace, freedom, forgiveness, salvation, joy, and happiness that we can only find in the Lord. I pray that we all experience Jesus' rest in our lives today and every day. Amen.