

## Matthew 11:28-30

*Matthew 11:28* “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

What a hauntingly attractive invitation from Jesus! These words have drawn innumerable people over the last twenty centuries. Like many biblical passages, this one is “shallow enough for babies to wade in, and deep enough for elephants to drown in.” Let us consider several truths contained in these three verses.

First, the “rest” of which Jesus speaks is not the rest of inactivity, still less of sloth. For this rest involves getting into a yoke, which is an instrument of labor. Rather, this rest is “rest for your *souls*.” The Greek word for rest here (*anapausis*) often means refreshment for people who are exhausted. Soul-refreshment, then, is Jesus’ promise to those of us who are weary and overwhelmed with life in this broken world. It is similar to the “peace” that Jesus promises His followers which can displace the anxiety we often feel in a broken and spiritually hostile world (John 14:27; 16:33).

Second, Jesus’ promise of soul-rest to all who “come to Me” is one of His many claims to be God. Who else could make such a stupendous promise to all of humanity? Furthermore, when Jesus says “and you will find rest for your souls,” He is quoting Jeremiah 6:16, in which God Himself says: “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; *and you will find rest for your souls*.”



Third, Jesus appears to be issuing two different invitations. In verse 28, He says “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” This appears to be an invitation to come to Him as our Savior, as the Messiah – and to receive His gift of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Jesus issued a similar invitation elsewhere when He said: “If anyone is thirsty, let him *come to Me* and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37,38). At the heart of our soul-weariness is separation from God, Whom we were created to know personally, and without Whom we can never make sense of our lives. What relief there is in responding to Jesus’ invitation, and then experiencing the deep soul-rest of being at peace with God (see Romans 5:1)! If you sense God speaking to you through Jesus’ invitation, simply come to Him right now in faith and ask Him to forgive you and usher you into a personal love relationship with his Father. He *will* give you rest!

In verses 29 and 30, Jesus appears to make a second invitation – evidently to those who have already come to Him. As those who have received Jesus as our Savior, we have the “rest” of our permanent status as God’s children. But we know from personal experience that we can still become anxious and overwhelmed in this broken and hostile world. How can we continue to experience rest for our souls? Jesus’ answer is in His invitation: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me . . . and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Jewish males were commanded to take on “the yoke of the Law of Moses” when they entered into adulthood – that is, to pledge to obey all of God’s commandments. But this yoke is ultimately a yoke of bondage, because no one can perfectly obey God (see Acts 15:10). Instead, Jesus invites us to “learn from Me.” His teaching is liberating rather than burdensome because He is a loving Teacher, and because He will personally empower us to follow His instruction.

Fourth, when Jesus invites us to learn from Him, He says: “*for* I am gentle and humble in heart.” The “for” is probably better translated



“that.” If so, Jesus is saying that *allowing Him to teach us His humility is the way to find rest for our souls*. Many, many other biblical passages teach us that the root cause of our anxiety is pride, and that the way to peace or soul-rest is humility. My favorite passage on this relationship is another hauntingly beautiful passage:

O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;  
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,  
Or in things too difficult for me.  
Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;  
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,  
My soul is like a weaned child within me. (Psalm 131:1,2)

Finding ongoing rest for our souls comes from continuing to follow Jesus, and following Jesus involves allowing Him to expose our pride and teach us humility. This is an instructional course that continues throughout our entire Christian lives – because our pride is far deeper and far more ingrained than we realize. We cannot kill our pride or engineer our own humility; only He can do this. But He is a gentle and faithful Teacher, and the soul-rest that He gives us as we learn this lesson is more than worth it!

*Lord Jesus, thank You that You are both willing and able to give us rest for our souls. Thank You that You died for our sins which kept us separated from God, so that by receiving You we can be reconciled to God. Thank You that You are a loving and gentle Teacher, guiding us down the path of humility so that we may find ongoing rest for our souls. Help us to make the most of today's opportunities to learn humility from You.*

