

come to Christ once and again, and so convict those who refuse to come to Christ time and again.

This gospel message of Jesus' welcoming words is so special and rich thinking yet of the promise Jesus makes to all coming to Him. "Come unto Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden....and I'll thrash you and beat you and torment you, and condemn you forever, you sinful, rebellious wretches! Come to Me, and I will send you all to hell, the whole lot of you sinners, without exception!" Is that what the text says? No, thank God, no! It is what we always deserve left to ourselves, but this is what Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, is all about! Jesus as Sinbearer, and Saviour of sinners, in the sinner's place suffered all that just wrath of God against sin, that now whoever believes on Him and ever comes to Him, and always and again relies on Him, may find salvation with God now and forever! "Come unto Me", says Jesus therefore, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What a beautiful promise this is! He will cause to cease all unrest and all labour on our part to get right with God and be accepted by Him. We are saved forever by grace alone, through faith alone, looking to Christ alone! We may enjoy such rest now through our Saviour from sin, the once crucified but now ever exalted Saviour in glory above. Rest from all working on our part to become accepted of God and to be children of God and heirs of eternal life, perfect genuine and eternal rest is the believer's lot through Jesus Christ our Lord, and ever trusting and following after Him.

What unrest Jesus suffered and endured that people like you and me, as many as repent and believe, might find true and eternal rest with Him. In the eternal rest to come, endless ages won't be enough for thanksgiving to God Triune for the rest Jesus gives to undeserving sinners as we are in ourselves. There is no rest apart from God, but all rest to be found even also with God, in and through Jesus Christ the Saviour. Are you, dear friend, a person coming to Christ in faith now, and seeing as time goes on, all the more reason to come to Him, and keep coming to Him for as long as life shall last? "Come unto Me", says Jesus, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Thus says the Lord! Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



JESUS' WELCOMING WORDS

As we begin a new year, we have before us one of the most well known of Jesus' words. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let us think about this verse under the theme, Jesus' welcoming words! By the leading of the Holy Spirit, this verse may be most welcoming news to someone at this time.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Who would not agree this Scripture verse gives a welcoming word? The word 'come' is a word we all know. "Come on over" we say to people, inviting them to our place. But what does Jesus mean when He says to people, "Come unto Me"? For Jesus said this to people who were already right by Him, indeed, often we read of crowds pressing in on Him, so close they were to Him. Well, you understand, Jesus doesn't mean here to come to Him physically speaking, but Jesus means to come to Him in faith. When Jesus says 'Come', He means calling upon Him, looking to Him, depending on Him, entrusting yourself to Him, hoping in Him, confessing all to Him, reaching out for Him, waiting upon Him, praying to Him, seeking Him, following after Him, believing on Him. 'Come unto Me in that way', says Jesus here.

Now what is so striking about these welcoming words is that these are words from Jesus, the only Saviour of sinners. The only Saviour, the One God the Father has ordained and equipped and sent into this world. Jesus is that promised Seed of the woman Whom God pledged the day man fell into sin. When this Jesus came into this world, He didn't go around saying to people or giving the impression to anyone in any way, "Stay away from Me! Don't you come to Me!" No, far from it! You have a wrong understanding of Scripture and its gracious gospel message, if you fail to realize this point of it all, Jesus earnestly calling, "Come unto Me!"

How important that we consider who this Jesus is too, as brought out in the verses before this invitation where Jesus brings out how He is the only begotten Son of God the Father and how no one "knows the Father save [except] the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." In other words, here we learn it is only through Jesus Christ, the one God-sent and God-approved Mediator between God and man, that anyone can be reconciled to God and be brought into a saving and blessed and eternal

relationship with God again, being under His favour and approval forever. Regardless of what modern and post-modern people may say and think, only Jesus can save us from our sins. Only Jesus through His saving work, His blood shed on behalf of sinners, can deliver us from being children of the devil and transform us into children of God. Only through Jesus is God's secret decree of sovereign election unto salvation also realized. In that very context, Jesus states these welcoming words: *"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

"Come unto Me!" says Jesus, not simply as a plea or gracious call, but with authority and as a divine blessed command. *"Come unto Me!"* says Jesus Christ the Lord. Are you a person who has come to Jesus and still comes to Jesus and hopes always to come to Jesus at His gracious invitation, with His warm welcoming words, *"Come unto Me"*? The Christian's life is one of always coming to Jesus in faith and repentance. *"Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."* Is this what describes your life too, dear friends?

Maybe some of you will say, *"No, that is not what describes my life."* It could be your life is so filled with other things, worldly pleasures, and self-centered living, you don't have time for coming to Jesus, nor do you really see the need to come to Him. Is that the way it is with you, my friend? You don't know you are a guilty sinner before God headed for eternal judgment in hell, left to yourself, or you know it, but you are not awakened to it nor alarmed by it? Are you still dead in trespasses and sins, and in this condition and state not recognizing that you are always just one heartbeat away from God's eternal wrath in hell, where there will be endless weeping and gnashing of teeth? Jesus, Who is not willing that any should perish, says here, and may it echo in your ears and heart and not leave your conscience and mind till you come to your senses, *"Come unto Me!"* If a child was left in a burning house and you were there, you would call to that child would you not, saying with a fervent passion and urgency, *"Come to me!"* So Jesus calls, also now to you still lost in sin and darkness. *"Come unto Me!"* Do you hear the Saviour calling you?

Maybe you are one who says, *"I hear that call, but I can't believe it is also really for me. I'm so confused actually and I have so many struggles about so many things, and so many people tell me so many different angles of the gospel, it is all just more troublesome and wearisome to me than anything else. In fact, I have resolved to try not to think about these things anymore, because it leaves me more all in the dark and depressed than anything."*

Oh, but then you see this verse is especially meant also for you. For having thought about the call, the plea in this verse, notice next, the called, the people to whom Jesus especially addresses these welcoming words. The text reads, *"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy*

laden, and I will give you rest." What does this second phrase mean and who does this refer to, *"all ye that labour and are heavy laden"*? The verb *"labour"* which is in the present tense refers to all who are struggling and just becoming so weary and tired in trying to figure out the way of the gospel and in looking to make yourself somehow worthy to be welcomed and saved by God. The verb *"being heavy laden"* is in the so called perfect tense and refers to finding yourself always burdened with your sense of insufficiency and your guilt and your total inadequacy for any good work and even any genuine faith, and even any true repentance.

The context of labouring and heavy laden is also in Matthew's gospel here within the setting of Judaism and all the laws and requirements the Pharisees liked to stress to their hearers. In other words, Jesus says *"Come unto Me"* to people oppressed with their sins and sinfulness and realizing something of their utter hopelessness of themselves for any good or any acceptance with God. Jesus says, *"Come unto Me"* to poor and needy sinners. Jesus says, *"Come unto Me"* you helpless, hopeless, heartless, heedless sinner, and to you, struggling, straining, stressed, stretched person, not knowing what to do, where to turn, where to look. *"Come unto Me"*, says Jesus to His people, to wandering sheep and to lost sheep and to confused sheep, and His call is even especially for you who are despairingly looking for help and becoming hopeless about hope and seeing yourself become more and more confused with every turn.

Notice too that word *"all"* in the text. Shouldn't that be stressed as well? *"Come unto Me"*, says Jesus, *"all ye that labour and are heavy laden"* yes, including you who labour and are heavy laden about not labouring and being heavy laden all that much or all too little. Maybe that word *"all"* will grip you and draw you unto Jesus with His cords of love. Come to Jesus, sinner, and find out He is the sinner's Saviour whatever stripe or type, degree or kind, or measure of sinner you may be. No case is too hard for Him, and no case is hopeless with Him!

To come to Jesus means to call upon Him and entrust yourself to Him, confessing all and pouring out your heart before Him, pleading, *"Here I am Lord Jesus, at Thy gracious command and call, sinful me without a plea. Only, O God, for Jesus' sake, be merciful to a sinner like me!"* Coming so to Jesus you won't be put to shame! The Christian faith and life is all about so coming to God and it is all about always returning to and building on the only foundation of all our hope and salvation, namely Jesus Christ, the once crucified and now ever risen and exalted Saviour. Ask yourself, and examine yourself on this matter....is your hope built on nothing less and nothing more, than Jesus Christ and His salvation and all His righteousness obtained for sinners like us through all His Person and work as Saviour?

How sad when people won't come to Jesus the only Saviour. I pray God that this welcoming word from Jesus will so encourage people to