

# A Message for the Broken-Hearted

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 11:25-30

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It was only yesterday that I had the privilege of speaking at the memorial service for Jeannie K. and as we've said, Jeannie was a godly woman whose body simply gave out after a five-year, to the day, battle with cancer and so the Lord took her to heaven. And whenever I do funerals or memorial services, I always find them to be a sobering time even for someone that is a Christian because funerals remind us that death is real, that life is serious, and that it often brings us heartache and trouble. If there were no biblical answer to the prosperity movement, and of course there is, a funeral would answer the health and wealth Gospel in a moment. Funerals are a reality check, no doubt, but they can also do us spiritual wonders if we take them seriously, if we think biblically, because the reality of death, the reality of mourning in the words of Ecclesiastes 7:2, is a profitable thing spiritually because the living see it and take it to heart. This is the end of every living man, Ecclesiastes says. I have a friend who put it in a slightly different manner, he said, "Don, one day you're going to be the center of attention at a service just like that." That's true for all of you too.

I think about it this way when I think about the Gospel of Christ in light of the reality of death and the funerals and the sadness that that brings, when jewelers display diamonds, they quite often put them on black velvet so that the stones seem more brilliant by contrast with the black background. The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the reality of death is like that. In a spiritual sense, the sadness of difficult times give us the opportunity to see the glory of Jesus Christ and the hope of the Gospel more clearly than we do at other times. It is more urgent. It is more clear in times of darkness than it is in times of prosperity. Small wonder that the Gospel seems to flourish more when the church is under persecution than when it is under prosperity. There is a reason for that because the contrast is there for everyone to see.

Now today it's not my purpose to do another memorial service for Jeannie, although her life was worthy of that, my purpose this morning is to talk to you knowing that many of you have come today with heavy hearts, grieving over life, grieving over the weight of your own sin and feeling your own spiritual inadequacy. As I was preparing for Jeannie's funeral, I realized that the passage I was going to preach there would be of use to you here in Grace Life as well and it's where I want to take your attention to this morning, a wonderful passage of comfort and encouragement found in Matthew 11 and I would ask you to turn to Matthew 11. I'm going to turn my watch upside down. I'm not paying

attention to the clock today. We'll be done when we're done, okay? We just need to drink in what our gracious Lord would have for us from this passage this morning and I encourage you as we come to this passage that you would be prepared to lay out your own burdens before what the Lord has to say here because he intends to bless us through his word this morning.

Matthew 11, beginning in verse 25,

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26 Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 27 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, 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."

I want you to notice particularly in verse 28 that Jesus says and who this passage is addressed to, he says, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden." He focuses the attention on and he calls people who are weary in life, heavy laden by its burdens and he says, "This is a message for you." I don't know about you but my ears today perk up at that. I say, "Yes Jesus, what is it that you would say? I, Lord, am weary and heavy laden, what is it that you would say to me? What is it that you would say to all of us who are in this condition?" Beloved, what I want you to see is that this passage speaks to Christian and non-Christian alike. Jesus says, "All who are weary and heavy laden." The principles that we are going to see today are the principles that would call a sinner into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, deliver him from eternal damnation and unto eternal life, and those very same principles are the principles that would encourage the heart of a beleaguered Christian under the weight of a difficult life. These are gracious words from the mind of an omniscient God delivered to those whom he has compassion upon.

So I want to do today is give you four key themes of the Gospel that would bring comfort to your broken and heavy heart this morning. Four key themes of the Gospel that would bring comfort to your broken and heavy heart. The first principle is this, and I encourage you to take notes so that you can rewind this in your mind in the days to come. The first point is this: your helplessness is great. Your helplessness is great. In the context of this passage, Jesus is speaking about the spiritual realities of God's judgment and the call to repentance. In verses 20 to 24, he had pronounced judgments on cities who had refused to repent even though they had seen the miracles of Christ done in their very midst and he told them in verse 24, he said, "I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you because you did not repent when the Son of man was in your presence."

That's the background, the backdrop of this passage and it reminds us of this reality, it reminds us of the reality of sin. It reminds us of the reality that each one of you and I have fallen short of the glory of God. Each of us has broken God's law and our sin deserves his judgment because he is a holy God and he cannot excuse the violation of his law. Speaking of us as the human race, we are guilty. Death entered the world because of sin, it says in Romans 5, and it spread to the whole human race and the rebellion of Adam against God is something that each of us have inherited and in different ways and in different circumstances we have lived it out in our own lives as well, and the Bible says that an eternal hell awaits those who die in their sins. That's pretty serious. Your helplessness is great and yet the remarkable thing in light of that spiritual truth and that spiritual reality, the remarkable thing that despite the enormous unspeakable collapse of the human race before a holy God, is that men still carry around their spiritual pride and spiritual arrogance as if they could somehow live a life that was pleasing to God and that somehow out of the depths of their own wicked heart they would find something that they did that would cause God on their own merits to receive them into heaven.

And Jesus goes right to the heart of that arrogance and exposes the helplessness of us all in verse 25 when he says, look at the verse with me again. As he's talking about the realities of judgment and spiritual life, he says in verse 25, "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.'" He's saying the people that consider themselves to be wise, the people that consider themselves to be intelligent spiritually speaking, are the people that have never seen the grace of God to begin with. By contrast and what I want you to see this morning, is that God gives his salvation to those who know that they are like infants, helpless and unable to do any righteous deeds that would make them acceptable to God. You must come to God with a broken heart. You must come confessing your own weakness and inability to please him. If you think about it, a newborn baby, you don't even have to think about this one so this one's for free, okay, you can kind of take a mental break with what I'm about to say here. A newborn baby does not have the capacity to care for himself. Unless he has someone to take care of his needs, that baby would quickly perish. He is helpless. Beloved, what I want to say to you this morning and what I beg you from the bottom of my heart to embrace and to recognize and to take before a holy God, is that you have to recognize your own helplessness.

Since all of us have sinned, we cannot fix our own condition either in terms of obtaining eternal life or in overcoming the enormous challenges of death and sin in this life even as a believer, we need help from outside of ourselves if we are going to transcend it. We're like infants who need help unless we perish. Beloved, it's not the people who think they are wise that become saved. It is not the people who think they are good. The Bible says over and over again that God is opposed to the proud. He gives grace to the humble. So the starting point of entering into the wonderful rest that Jesus describes in this passage when he says, "Come to Me and I will give you rest," you have to start by recognizing that you need his help. You have to embrace that. If you are to be saved from your sins, you must admit your helplessness and it's humbling. It's contrary to the spirit of our age to say such things but, beloved, it's the truth and I plead with you to embrace it. It's the

same truth that we have studied elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who understand and embrace and acknowledge and confess their spiritual bankruptcy." That's the idea. Beloved, your helplessness is great and you need to embrace that.

Secondly as we move through this passage, as we see the jewels of Gospel truth laid out before us, we see our helplessness, we see our sinfulness, and we see that it is great. Beloved, that sets you up for a wonderful contrast That sets you up for words of hope because point 2 this morning is this: while your helplessness is great, while you are a great sinner, beloved, point 2, Jesus is a great Savior. Jesus is a great Savior. Now, thousands upon thousands of books have been written about the greatness of Jesus Christ, some of them better than others. I can't begin to unfold the beginning of his greatness in this brief time that we have here together. I have to only pick out a couple of things that are found in this passage, a couple of aspects of his greatness today that Jesus emphasizes as he talks about the realities of judgment and his promise of great rest. Jesus is a great Savior, first of all, because he has great authority. He has great authority.

Look at verse 27 with me. This is a marvelous verse, a self-description by Christ himself when he says, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the son and anyone to whom the son wills to reveal him." Jesus here in this verse is making an exclusive claim. He says that he is the only one in all of creation, in all of the universe in things seen and unseen, one who fully knows God the Father and he says, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Jesus here in this verse is making an exclusive truth claim. He says that he is the only one in all of creation, in all of the universe in things seen and unseen. He is the only one who fully knows God the Father and he says only God the Father fully knows him. There is a mutual inter-penetration of their knowledge of one another. The only person, beloved, that could understand the fullness of the mind and the plan and the power of an infinite God the Father, is someone who is equal to him and that's Jesus Christ, God the Son, who knows him in that fully exhaustive way.

This is a statement of deity. This is saying, "I know everything that there is to know about God." I mean, take my breath away. Take my breath away. That's an astonishing claim but notice as Jesus is speaking here, that he goes even further. Look at the end of verse 27. He says, "no one knows the Father except the Son and," get this, "anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him." No one comes to know God the Father unless Jesus Christ out of the goodness of the pleasure of his own heart says, "I want that to happen." He has authority over salvation, over life and hell and death. That's what he's saying here and, beloved, what I want you to see here is that this is the flipside of recognizing your own helplessness. You must see Jesus Christ as the exclusive means through which anyone comes to know God. Until you understand that basic foundational truth, you haven't understood spiritual reality at all. The Bible repeatedly points us in this direction. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me." In Acts 4:12, it says, speaking of Christ, "There is salvation in no one else

for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Listen, if you're here and you're not a Christian, let me speak to you very directly and very plainly and just beg you to see Christ for all of his authority and to recognize that and to confess it. Confessing him as Lord is the sine qua non; it is the essential thing about coming to true salvation. You have to see Jesus for who he is, great and exalted, and see yourself by contrast helpless and debased because only then will you truly come to Christ and put your faith in him in the way that you need to. Jesus is a great Savior because he has great authority, beloved.

But listen to me on this next aspect of his greatness as a Savior: if Jesus' office as a Savior was only based on his authority, we might turn away from him in abject fear. If it was only based on his authority, we could worry that perhaps he is arbitrary, perhaps he is harsh, perhaps he is uncaring, perhaps he would not receive us in light of his authority and in light of our helplessness. But this beautiful passage in the Gospel of Matthew that the Holy Spirit has preserved for us through the inspiration of God's word, shows us another dimension of how great a Savior Jesus is and it's not just that he has great authority but, beloved, he has great compassion. He has great compassion. Jesus' authority does not mean he is a distant deity. To the contrary, he came to earth, he came to the cross, he rose from the grave, he ascended into heaven, and when he speaks, beloved, he speaks from the greatness of a sympathetic heart.

Look at verse 29 with me. As much as you need to lay hold of the authority of Jesus Christ, beloved, you need to just as equally lay hold of this great point as well and hold both of them equally in your mind and in your heart. Jesus says in verse 29, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart." Beloved, when you come to Jesus with a heavy heart weighed down by sin, knowing that you need salvation, when you come to him as a believer weighed down by the trials of life, understand that Jesus responds without fail. Jesus responds with the without fail in grace and mercy. That is what a great Savior does.

Jesus once compared himself to a physician who receives sick patients in Luke 5:31 and 32. Jesus said, "It is not those who are well who need a physician but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." This is so precious. I wish there was some way that I could open your hearts and just put it in there so that it would stay there forever in your thinking and in your spiritual understanding and that it would be the cornerstone of everything that you think about Christ. We are so prone to think even as believers that if we stumble along the way that God is suddenly putting his arms around his chest and saying, "What do you have to say for yourself?" Beloved, when you go to Christ conscious of your sins, he receives you like a doctor receives sick patients. And listen, if you are physically ill, if you've got a brain in your head anyway which I'm happy to affirm that all of you do, if you are physically ill, you don't wait until you're better to go see the doctor. You say, "Boy, I'd be embarrassed to go to the doctor with this sickness. I just couldn't show up to him when I'm sick and feverish and chilling like this. I'd better wait until I get better and then I'll go and see him so he'll think better

of me." That would be ridiculous. Beloved, it is equally ridiculous to approach Jesus any differently than that. The very point of being a doctor is that by his training he has the skill to make you well. In the same way, beloved, on the authority of Jesus himself, Jesus' role is to receive sinners and save them. Jesus' role is to bring sinners to repentance. You don't have to clean your act up and then go to Jesus. That is the flipside of how it works.

Beloved, go to Jesus now even in your sin and plead with him to save you, plead with him to be merciful to you, plead with him to help you. Do you understand that he does not do that reluctantly? He is not a reluctant Savior. He is a saving Savior. He is gentle and humble in heart. That is why he came. "For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Beloved, in our desire to hold up a high view of God which is right and good and necessary in this debauched age in which we live in, don't you ever forget that God is love and Jesus is a gentle and humble Savior, and he receives sinners who have no other means of helping themselves.

And so are you here today with a heavy laden heart? Beloved, Jesus is a great Savior. Go to him, my friend. Go to him. Let him prove to you that what he said here is true. He is God. He has authority. He has power over every sin and difficulty that troubles your heart, and because he is gentle, beloved, he will welcome you and he will deal with you kindly. because he died and rose again, he can put your sin away forever so that you never need to fear the judgment of God again. I say to you again, my friends, go to him. Yes, your helplessness is great but Jesus is a great Savior.

Now, to appropriate these promises that he makes, "I will give you rest," to appropriate those promises, you need to understand something. Maybe I can set it up this way. In some of the trials that have troubled me over my life going back to my earlier days of my Christian life, I had the mistaken idea that the comfort that Jesus provides just kind of happened automatically, kind of like a thermostat operates to control the temperature of the room. As the trials get hotter, you know, the comfort just automatically rises to meet the level of the trial. That's not the way it works, beloved, you have a responsibility to play in this. You have to understand that there is a seeking that you need to do and this ties in with point 3 here: Jesus makes a great call. Jesus makes a great call. In order to appropriate his promises, you have to do what he says here.

Look at verse 28. Verse 28, Jesus says, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Verse 29, he says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me." Jesus says, "Come to Me. Take My yoke upon you. Learn from Me." Beloved, you have a personal responsibility if you would receive this help from this great Savior. These great blessings that Jesus bestows on those whom he loves, he doesn't just throw this blessing on someone regardless of the state of their own heart. You can't be arrogant. You can't consider yourself self-sufficient. As we saw earlier, God is opposed to the proud and he hides his salvation from those who are wise in their own eyes. You have to see your own helplessness but you have to go further. You have to put your own personal trust in Christ in order to be saved from your sins. You have to put your own personal trust in

him in order to receive the rest and blessing that he promises as you deal with the struggles of Christian life. You have to stir your heart up toward these things.

And I'm just particularly moved today to speak to those of you that are not Christians. You cannot be saved because your parents were Christians. You cannot be saved by a minister or a priest or a church. You can't be saved by your own efforts. You, my non-Christian friend, you have to go to Christ himself for salvation. Don't let anyone tell you that you should go to Mary and see if Mary can get her son to help you out. Jesus says, "Come to Me." Jesus invites you as a sinner to come directly to him and apply your case to his consideration and care.

And beloved, what I want you to see in this all too briefly, is that what Jesus is talking about when he says, "Come to Me. Take My yoke upon you," this is no superficial response. When he speaks about the yoke, the yoke was a wooden bar that would be placed over the necks of farm animals that were used in the plowing of fields and would be attached to a harness. An owner used that yoke to control the animals in the field and to direct them to where he wanted them to go. Jesus here is using yoke as a symbol of his control and ownership over you. What he is saying is, "Put your faith in me in such a way and to such a level that you consciously submit to my authority in every area of your life."

Now, you say, "Boy, I don't know if I want to do that or not. I want to have some control here." Well, this is why Jesus says and as an encouragement to do that, he says, "I am gentle and humble in heart." He is no harsh taskmaster. He says, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." It is not a toilsome thing to come to Christ and live for him. It is not a toilsome thing to submit your trials of this life as a Christian to him. No, he gives ongoing rest to your soul out of the gentleness and humility of his own heart to live for the purposes for which he created you. "Take my yoke upon you. It's easy. It's light," he says. A skilled farmer would shake that yoke for his cattle so that it rested comfortably on the animal's shoulders and actually helped him pull the weight rather than pressing on the neck. Beloved, when Jesus talks about the yoke that he has, understand that he fashions you for the trials and circumstances that you will go through in this life and gives you the grace necessary to live them out. That's part of having a good and easy yoke. Jesus says, "Just embrace me and do it my way and you'll find that you have the grace that you need."

The spirit of the response is this, it comes from the heart that says, "Jesus, I know I am a sinner who needs to be saved. I believe you are the only Savior and that you died for me. I turn from my sins. I put myself entirely in your hands and I will follow you wherever you lead me." That's the spirit of a saving response to Jesus' call here and what I want you to see, beloved, is that this great call goes to everyone in this room and everyone that will hear this on any other form of media. This great call goes to everyone in this room who is weary and heavy laden. Here is the door out of your heavy and broken heart. Here is the place where you open the door and you enter in and you find rest. It's through recognizing the greatness of your helplessness, recognizing the greatness of the Savior,

and humbly responding to his great call and say, "I'll trust you and I'll follow you. You direct me wherever you want me to go."

Beloved, if you are weary and heavy laden, God brought you here today to hear just that. This is how you respond. Why would you turn away from it? Why would you hear such gracious words from God the Son and say, "Eh, that's not what I want"? If you're not feeling the weight of life or the weight of sin, hey, Jesus isn't talking to you anyway so you don't have to trouble yourself with this because he is talking to the weary and heavy laden.

Now today, beloved, I'm speaking to the broken heart. I'm speaking to the heavy heart that looks at the circumstances of life and says, "There is no way out of this and it grieves me." Beloved, if that's you, you're the one I'm talking to and I want you to see a gentle and humble Savior reaching out to you and offering his rest and his peace to you today, right now. This is a call that goes to the young adult who is confused and does not know where to turn. This is the call that goes to the woman who grieves and cannot find comfort. This is the call that goes to the man who has wasted his life and has very little time to redeem it. This is the call that goes to people like you and a thousand others like you and Jesus says, "Come to me and I will give you rest."

Now, while Jesus claims sovereign authority over who comes to God the Father, understand that he brings people to the Father, he brings sinners to the Father through an open invitation to anyone that will hear. "Come to me," he says. This isn't restricted by race or class or anything else. If you want someone who can really unite people, Jesus is the one. Without condition he says, "Come to me." Anyone who will hear, that promise is for you. If you're weary from sin, afraid of death, Jesus says, "Come, I will transform that situation." It's a great call.

Now, you've heard the phrase, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. At least we said that in southern Indiana. I don't know about around here. It's not enough for you to know that you're a sinner and that Jesus is the Son of God. The Bible says the demons believe and tremble. No, beloved, you have to put your own faith in Christ. You have to take the step of coming to him and putting your own faith in him. And what's the result of that? What happens when you see your great helplessness and you respond to the great call of a great Savior? Final point, point 4: Jesus gives great rest. Jesus gives great rest.

Look at verse 28 with me again. I've been weaving this in through everything I've said already anyhow. "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Verse 29, "You will find rest for your souls." Verse 30, "My yoke is easy." Verse 30, "My burden is light." Oh, heavy hearted friend, don't those words echo in your mind? Don't those words just call you to Christ and woo you to him and say, "Yes, that is what I want and that is what I need"? Listen, this is the promise of Christ himself whose word can never fail. Throughout the history of the Christian church, throughout the 2,000 years of people coming to Christ in the way that he describes here, not once has he ever broken this promise. Not once has anyone come to him and found him an insufficient Savior. Not



once has anyone ever truly come to Christ and found him to be a harsh taskmaster who didn't deal with them in compassion. It doesn't mean they didn't have the trials but the sweet succor of Christ was in their midst. When you come to Christ, you find rest for your souls. He's talking here about spiritual rest, the rest that comes from a clear conscience; peace with God and joy that transcends your circumstances. The rest of knowing that heaven, not judgment, awaits you when you die.

Jesus says to every broken heart, "Come to me in exactly that condition and I will give you rest that you can find nowhere else." In this passage, he doesn't say how he will give it. Elsewhere in the Bible we learn that he purchased that rest by shedding his own blood on the cross. He stood as the substitute for sinners, taking the wrath of God in his own body so that their sins could be forgiven and when you receive him, beloved, he wraps you in his perfect righteousness so that you can stand accepted before a holy God and have full and unhindered access to him for the rest of eternity. Jesus bought your relationship with God through his death and resurrection and that is why he says, "Come to me." He's a great Savior who gives a great rest. My friends, are you living in the midst of that rest? If not, come to him. My friends, I ask you: won't you seek this treasure from him?

Let's pray.

*Lord Jesus, we love you. How could we respond any other way than to say we love you, God of all the universe, reaching down to our broken hearts and saying, "Come to me and I will give you rest." O Lord, today we come and we seek that rest. We take your yoke and pledge our loyalty to you and ask you to teach us and to direct us for the sake of your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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