

Come To Me, All Who are Weary
Psalm 145:8-14; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Let's begin by asking very pertinent questions: Are there any here this morning who have never been weary? Are there any present who have never had to carry a heavy heart burden? Those who answered "yes" are free to leave.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

“Come onto me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” We know these words. These words are grafted deep into our souls. Matthew 11:28-30 is one of the greatest Bible passages in the New Testament. This teaching is like a diamond, or whatever jewel that you treasure as enormously valuable. It is one of those Bible verses that we to commit to memory because they are so true, and we need them to be in our arsenal of scriptures that are at the ready when we need them, like John 3:16 or the 23rd Psalm or I Corinthians 13 or other favorite Bible verse that you memorize. These words are great and necessary for our daily lives.

You see, we live in a society where compulsive religion is no longer the norm for many. But with live with other burdens: fear, anger, and pride. These burdens imprison us. It is only when we lay down these burdens that imprison us that we can open our hearts to receive the joy and love, the life and rest that Jesus has promised us.

However, we must consider the context of the Scripture to understand the verse more clearly. The verses for today, Matthew 11:28-30 are an introduction to Matthew 12. In Matthew 12, we hear about the Pharisees who were making religion very complicated and difficult. Their kind of religion was like a heavy yoke around people's necks. Their religion consisted of don't do this and don't do that. Their religion was no, no, no. Don't. Don't. Don't. Theirs was a religion of 600 religious rules and regulations and rituals that people were not to do.

For example, in Matthew 12, Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field one Sabbath day and his disciples were picking grain in order to eat it. The Pharisees were upset that the disciples were picking grain because it was the Sabbath holy day. How ridiculous. No, no, no, no, no. Don't you pick grain on the Sabbath and eat it, even if you are hungry. No, no, no, no, no. How ridiculous. How absurd. How foolish.

In the next story, the Pharisees objected to Jesus healing a man with a withered hand because it was the Sabbath holy day and no one was to heal people on the Sabbath. How ludicrous. How ridiculous. How silly. No, no, no, no, no. Don't heal a man on the Sabbath, even if his hand is handicapped. No, no, no, no, no. How preposterous. How picky.

These Pharisees had turned religion into a series of rules, regulations and rituals which were

like burdens on peoples' shoulders. Their religion consisted of six hundred nos. The religion of the Pharisees had become a burden, like a heavy yoke on the people's shoulders.

It is not that Jesus invites us to a life of ease. Following him is full of risks and challenges. He calls us to a life of humble service, but it is a life of freedom and joy instead of slavery.

We all need to wear the yoke of Jesus. We need to wear the yoke of caring for neighbor and for friend. We need to wear the yoke of love for others...

Love of God. Love of neighbor. Mercy, love, and kindness. A faith that moves mountains and carries momentous burdens.

Last week I felt as if I was burdened with the weight of a great yoke, the weight of which I could not bear. Four friends, in the span of one week, had received medical news that cancer had returned, metastasized to other organs and was more aggressive. In addition, my mom's best friend for my whole life was moved to palliative care unit of the hospital and died on Sunday evening. In the midst of these medical crisis, there were times when I even found it hard to breath. And another dear friend shared that she would have to undergo surgery to determine if the lumps identified in her breasts were cancerous!

As I brought my pleas to God, I prayed that God would direct my steps and show me how to be his faithful disciple in the midst of the chaos. Sure enough, one morning as I drove to Thomasville, God made it clear that I should offer my friends a worship service of healing and wholeness. I made the phone calls and was met with enthusiastic approval.

Making a long story short, last Sunday afternoon in Pilot Mountain, I led that service. The church was filled! 75-100 people gathered on a holiday weekend, with little notice, to sing, to pray, to lay hands on, to ask God for healing for others and for selves. After the first 2, I invited anyone who wanted to ask God to take their pain, their yoke from them to come forward, and 14 people came to the front pews.

You see, all people become weary and carry heavy burdens in life. He didn't say that particularly *good* people should come to him. *Nor* did he suggest that any *special group* should come like Jews, Christians, or whatever. It is the word, ALL. All people are to come to God. All people are invited to Jesus. For ALL are broken, ALL are weary, ALL are in need, ALL are searching for relief. So the Savior promised, "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." It is tailor made for each of us and furthermore, He is always there with us to bear the burden.

And if Jesus Christ gives you rest, you may be sure it will be a rest indeed; it will be such a rest as your soul wants; it will be a rest which the world can neither give nor take away. Amen.