

When Jesus Speaks...

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this morning with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the gospel according to Matthew and chapter 11.

Matthew chapter 11, and if we consider verses 28 down to the verse marked 30, where Jesus says, Come to me, all who labour 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.

Over the past couple of months, since we began living in lockdown and coping with COVID and dealing with social distancing, we've slowly become used to what many have regarded as the new normal.

We call it now the new normal. But you know, when is it normal to stay away from those whom we love? When is it normal to have streets and villages in silence?

[1 : 09] When is it normal to have shops and schools closed? When is it normal to have church services suspended? When is it normal to have so many people working from home or not working at all?

Of course, the truth is, the new normal is not normal at all. In fact, I would say that it's an empty statement that's trying to cover up the fact that people, politics, places and powers, which many thought to be once safe and secure, they've now all been unveiled and uncovered before our eyes to be seen for what they really are.

And that is frail, fragile and feeble. My friend, over the past two months of living in lockdown, so much has changed. Our circumstances have changed.

Our lives have changed. You could even say that we've changed. And yet, you know, despite all these changes, the Bible assures us that Jesus hasn't changed.

Because Jesus is still the same. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. And because Jesus hasn't changed, Jesus is still speaking to us.

[2 : 22] Because, you know, Jesus, he's still speaking to us through his creation. The Bible reminds us that the heavens are still declaring the glory of God. And the skies are still proclaiming his handiwork.

And day after day and night after night, Jesus is still speaking to us through his creation. And he's speaking to us to the point that everyone throughout this world has heard his voice.

So that we are without excuse. Jesus is still speaking to us through his creation. But he's still speaking to us also through his providence. Jesus is speaking to us through all the personal circumstances and situations in our lives.

Jesus is speaking to us through this coronavirus. But, you know, what we must always remember is that our providences, all the things that are going on in our life, no matter how hard or how heartbreaking they may be, all these things are not to make us run from Jesus.

No, they're to make us run to Jesus. Because when we run to Jesus, we're reminded that Jesus is not only speaking to us through creation and throughout providence, but he's also speaking to us through his word.

[3 : 41] And, you know, that's what we see this morning. Jesus is speaking to us through his word. And he's speaking to all of us. It doesn't matter who you are or where you are in the world or what you're going through today.

Jesus is speaking to you this morning and he's speaking to you personally. And my friend, when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me.

When Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me. And that's what's happening in these well-known verses.

Jesus is speaking to you through his word. And when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me.

So first of all, when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, listen to me. When Jesus speaks, he says in verse 28, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[4 : 59] 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.

My friend, when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me. But how do you know when Jesus is speaking to you personally? How do you know when Jesus is speaking to you directly?

How do you know when Jesus is speaking to you and you're not just making it up or inventing it in your own mind? Well, the reason I'm preaching on these verses this morning is because I believe that Jesus was telling me to.

And I don't say that lightly. But I say it because this text has repeatedly come up again and again over the past few weeks. First of all, the children in the Sunday school have been memorizing these verses over the past few weeks.

And since then, through daily readings and daily verses, this passage has been repeatedly appearing. And then again on Wednesday evening, our elder, Inesia, he was speaking about these verses in Matthew 11.

[6 : 13] Which only confirmed to me the importance of what Jesus is saying here. And that's why I'm preaching on these verses this morning. It wasn't an accident. It's not by chance.

It's not a passage that I chose at random. No. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus impressed the truth of God's word upon my heart.

And you know, that's how you know when Jesus is speaking to you. Because I believe that Jesus speaks to us sometimes using the same text of scripture more than once.

And when we have that, when we have that same text of scripture more than once, the Holy Spirit, he impresses the truth of God's word upon our heart.

Convincing us that Jesus is speaking to us. And you know, my friend, when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me. He says, listen to me.

[7 : 08] Come to me. Because what Jesus is saying to you this morning, as it is in the words of our text, come to me. When Jesus speaks, he says, come to me. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

My friend, when Jesus speaks, it's a command. It's a cry. It's a call. Come to me. But it's not an altar call where Jesus is urging you to raise your hand or come to the front or get out of your seat.

No, Jesus, he's calling us to come. And he's not calling us to come to a place of worship or come to a preacher or come to a denomination or come and say a prayer.

No, Jesus is saying in your heart, come to me. Come to me. But you know, who is this invitation for? Who is the gospel offer for?

Who is Jesus speaking to when he says, come to me? And you might be saying to yourself, well, surely he's not speaking to me. He can't be speaking to me.

[8 : 15] He can't be talking to me because I'm not good enough. I'm not fit enough. I'm not worthy enough. I don't know enough. Surely Jesus isn't speaking to me.

My friend, you know, it's often said that large doors swing on small hinges. Large doors swing on small hinges.

And you know what Jesus is saying here is that the doors of the great gospel invitation, they have swung wide open on the small hinge of the word all.

All. All. All. Therefore, the invitation to come, says Jesus, is to all. And the offer is for all. And Jesus is speaking to us all.

And when Jesus speaks, he says, come to me. Come to me. And, you know, as we said, when Jesus is speaking to you, he speaks to you with the same text of scripture more than once.

[9 : 21] But, you know, the wonder of this gracious gospel invitation is that the word come. The word come appears more than 500 times in the Bible, which ought to emphasize and reemphasize that Jesus is saying to you this morning, come to me.

Come to me. You know, it's the same message that Isaiah preached in his day. When Isaiah said he put out the gracious gospel invitation in Isaiah 55, he said, everyone who thirsts, come.

Come to the waters. He who has no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Incline your ear and come to me.

Hear and your soul may live. Jesus also said in John 7 in his day, if anyone, if any man, if any woman, if any boy, if any girl is thirsty, let them come to me and drink.

And your Bible, it even concludes with a gracious gospel invitation in Revelation 22. It concludes with the words, the spirit and the bride say, come.

[10 : 36] And let the one who is who hears say, come. And let the one who is thirsty, come. You know, my friend, Jesus is speaking to you this morning and he's saying, listen to me.

You need to come to me. You need to come to me. And, you know, Jesus says the qualification for coming to him is not whether you are good enough or fit enough or worthy enough or know enough. No, the qualification for coming to Jesus is, are you weary or worried? Are you burdened or backslidden? Are you distressed or distraught?

Are you flawed or a failure? Are you anxious or agitated? Are you tempted or going through trial? Are you restless or repentant? Are you struggling with sin, sickness, stress, suffering or sorrow? My friend, that's your qualification to come to this Jesus. And, you know, what's remarkable is that this qualification describes all of us.

[11 : 43] Because there's not one of us in this world who has it all together. No matter what front or facade we put up before the eyes of others, the reality is we're all broken people living broken lives in a broken world.

We're all restless and we're all looking for rest. But our Bible tells us that you won't find rest until you come to Jesus. You won't find rest, my friend, until you come to this Jesus.

Do you know the early church father, Augustine? He was from the third century and he once wrote, Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee.

Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee. I know that's what Jesus is saying. Come to me and I will give you rest.

And, you know, the emphasis is on the word I. I will give you rest. Literally, it's I alone will give you rest. Meaning that there's nothing and there's no one in this life that will give you rest for your undying soul apart from Jesus.

[13 : 02] Because, my friend, no amount of fun or finance or flirting or even fitness, none of these things will give you rest for your undying soul. That's why you need to come to this friend who is called Jesus.

And when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me and lean upon me. And that's what we see secondly. When Jesus speaks, he says, lean upon me. Listen to me and lean upon me. Jesus says, come to me. 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.

My friend, if you think that you're not good enough or worthy enough or fit enough or don't know enough to come to Jesus, then this passage is good news for you.

[14 : 10] If you're worried or weary, burdened or backslidden, distressed or distraught, you feel you're flawed or a failure, you're anxious or agitated, troubled or tired, restless or repentant, then this passage is good news for you.

If you're struggling with sin, sickness, stress, suffering or sorrow, then this passage is good news for you. My friend, as those who are broken people living broken lives in a broken world, this passage is good news.

Because Jesus here, he's encouraging and exhorting us, first of all to listen to him, but then to lean upon him. And you know, again, this is an imperative from Jesus.

This is a command. It's a cry. It's a call. Jesus says, take my yoke upon you. Take my yoke upon you. And of course, when Jesus says yoke, he isn't referring to the runny yellow kind, the kind that many people are swallowing on behalf of the NHS.

No, Jesus is drawing our attention to the harness which was worn by oxen or horses to pull a cart or a plough. Where oxen or horses, they would be yoked together using a wooden beam that was carved to fit the neck and the shoulders of the animal in order to securely pull this heavy load.

[15 : 38] They were yoked together. And this imagery of being yoked or being under a yoke, it's repeatedly used throughout the Bible. But more often than not, this idea of yoke or being yoked together is used in the negative sense.

The negative sense of submission or oppression and being placed under the heavy yoke of slavery. We see that particularly in the book of Jeremiah, where the prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah, he even

preached to the people of Israel wearing a yoke.

He had a yoke about his neck. And by wearing a yoke around his neck, Jeremiah was giving to the people of Israel this vivid illustration of what was going to happen to them because of their sin. Because the Lord, in Jeremiah's day, the Lord had repeatedly called the Israelites to turn from their sin and come to him in repentance. But like many people still today, they refused.

And so in judgment, Jeremiah proclaimed to the Israelites that they're going to receive the yoke of bondage and slavery. They're going to be exiled into Babylon.

[16:52] They're going to live under the oppressive burden of Nebuchadnezzar and submit to him as their king and live in Babylon. And you know, that's how Jeremiah repeatedly described the exile in Babylon.

He called it the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar. But even though the yoke was often portrayed as this negative submission and this heavy burden of oppressive slavery, the promise that's given in the Old Testament was that the coming Messiah would break our yoke of slavery.

And you know, that's what Paul picks up on in Galatians 5, where he says that Jesus Christ has set us free from the yoke of slavery. In other words, Jesus Christ has set us free from the submission and oppression of sin, where we're no longer enslaved to sin and burdened by sin and weighed down by sin because we're free in Christ.

We're free in Christ. But my friend, we're only free in Christ when we take his yoke upon us. We're only free in Christ when we take his yoke upon us.

And that's what Jesus is saying here. Take my yoke upon you. Because the yoke which Jesus offers, it's not the yoke of slavery. It's the yoke of salvation.

[18:17] And Jesus' yoke of salvation, it's not a yoke of oppression. It's not burdensome. It's not heavy. It's not difficult. No, Jesus says there in verse 30 that his yoke of salvation is easy and his burden is light.

And you may be wondering, well, how do I free myself from this heavy and burdensome yoke of slavery to sin? How do I free myself from this yoke which I was born with on my back?

How do I free myself from this yoke which constantly weighs me down and reminds me that I've broken God's law and that I've fallen short of the glory of God and that the wages of sin is death and that it's appointed unto me once to die and after that, the judgment.

How do I free myself from this yoke of slavery? Because I know that if I were to enter eternity today with this yoke upon my back, I'm a hell-deserving sinner.

You may be asking this morning, my friend, how do I free myself from this yoke of slavery and come under the yoke of salvation? And you know, Jesus is saying to you, submit your life to me.

[19:35] Submit your life to me. As we said, the yoke is an illustration of submission. And that's what Jesus wants from us.

He wants submission. Because when Jesus speaks, he says, come to me and submit to me. Submit to my kingship.

Submit to my lordship. Submit your heart, your mind and your life. Submit it all to me. Submit it all to me. Come to me.

And submit to me. But you know, the irony is, the irony is many people don't see becoming a Christian as liberty.

Many people see it as lockdown. People think that Christianity and being a Christian is all about rules and regulations. It's all about do's and don'ts.

[20:34] It's all about boundaries and barriers. But you know, that's not the case at all. Because as I've said many times before, Christianity is not a religion about Jesus.

It's a relationship with Jesus. And in that relationship with Jesus, you act out of love, not liability. You live by faith, not fear.

You serve out of duty, not demand. You work in obedience, not obligation. And you're led by the Spirit, not self. Do you know, my unconverted friend, it seems to me that you refuse this liberty and freedom in Christ because you wrongly think that if you submit your life to Jesus Christ, if you became a Christian, then you'd lose so much that your life would somehow be miserable and unhappy.

But you know, nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth. If I could speak from personal experience, I can tell you that I never knew happiness, joy, peace and contentment and freedom until I submitted my life to Jesus Christ and confessed him as my Lord

and Saviour.

I never knew that happiness, that joy, that peace, that contentment, that freedom until I confessed Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.

[22 : 11] And my friend, the yoke of Christ, it's a yoke of freedom. It's not a yoke of slavery. The yoke of Christ is a yoke of salvation through submission. And if you want to be unshackled, if you want to be liberated and set free from your yoke of slavery to sin this morning, then you have to come and submit your life to Jesus Christ.

That's why Jesus is saying to you, come to me and submit to me. Bend your knee. Bend your knee because if you believe in your heart and if you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Saviour, then the promise is you will be saved.

My friend, by submitting to Jesus Christ, you'll receive the yoke of salvation. And under his yoke, the promise is that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

But you know, how is this yoke of salvation easy? And how is the burden of Jesus light? Because, you know, when we submit to the Saviour and come under the yoke of salvation, Jesus, this is the wonderful thing about the Gospel, Jesus bears our burden.

Jesus lifts the weight of the law. Jesus carries the density of our death. Jesus takes the strain of our selfishness. Jesus, as he's revealed in Isaiah 53, he bears our griefs and he carries our sorrows.

[23 : 52] When we come to Jesus, he does it all because his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Literally what Jesus is saying about his yoke, he says, his yoke is gracious and pleasant.

His yoke is gracious and pleasant. In fact, that's why Psalm 46, Psalm 46 tells us that God is our refuge and our strength and an ever-present help in time of trouble.

And the word help there in Psalm 46, it's the same or similar word that Jesus is using here. It also expresses the image of oxen being yoked together, walking side by side, bearing the burden.

And that's the good news of the gospel, is it not? That Jesus is our refuge and our strength and his yoke is easy and his burden is light. His yoke is gracious and pleasant because he's a very present help in our times of trouble.

He's the one who comes alongside us and takes the strain. He lifts the load and he walks with us and he bears our burden. This is the wonder of who Jesus is and what Jesus does when we come to him and submit our life to him.

[25 : 18] And you know, my friend, I can't understand anyone who would want to go through life and face death without Jesus.

I can't understand anyone who would want to refuse and reject this free offer of Jesus bearing their burden and lifting their load and carrying their sorrows.

I can't understand why you would want to refuse it and reject it and resist it any longer than you should have. You know, that's why Jesus is saying to you this morning, come to me and submit to me.

My friend, when Jesus speaks, when Jesus speaks, he's encouraging and exhorting you to listen to him, to lean upon him, and lastly, to learn from him.

When Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me, and learn from me. Learn from me.

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[26 : 32] 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.

Again, the statement, learn from me, it's an imperative, it's a command, it's a cry, it's a call. Learn from me. But you know, we can only learn from Jesus if we have come to Jesus and if we have come under the yoke of Jesus.

Because if you reject Jesus, if you refuse to come to Jesus, if you resist taking the yoke of Jesus, the Bible describes you as stiff-necked.

The Bible describes you as stiff-necked. That's the term that was often used to describe an ox or a horse that rejected, refused, and resisted to take their master's yoke.

They were stiff-necked. And then, you know, that's how the Lord described the Israelites in the wilderness. When they rejected, refused, and resisted the Lord and his commandments, the Lord called them a stiff-necked people.

[27 : 42] And my friend, you know, Jesus is saying to you this morning, don't be stiff-necked. Don't refuse and resist and reject my yoke. Don't think that you'll find rest for your soul in the fun or in the finance or in the flirting or in fitness.

Don't think that you'll find rest for your soul in all these things. No, Jesus says, don't be so stiff-necked. Take my yoke upon you. Submit your life to me. Listen to me. Lean upon me. Learn from me. Don't resist. Don't refuse. Come to me. And, you know, with this statement, Jesus, he's continuing the illustration of two oxen being yoked together. But he says, learn from me.

That statement, it was often expressed in the idea where oxen were chosen to work together and that there would be an older, experienced ox which would be yoked together with a younger, inexperienced ox.

[28 : 52] And, of course, the older ox was to teach the younger ox. And by being yoked together, both knowledge and experience would be shared between the yoke.

the younger ox would learn so that in turn, as it grows, it would also teach others. And, you know, when Jesus gives us this illustration from the words, learn from me, this illustration of an older and younger ox being yoked together, what Jesus is actually giving us is the biblical principle of discipleship.

Because to be a disciple of Jesus is to be a learner. And that's what the word disciple means. It means learner.

And that's what happens when you come to Jesus and come under the yoke of Jesus. You become a learner. You put your L plates on and you become a disciple of Jesus.

And, you know, as a disciple of Jesus, you have the best teacher. You have the best teacher. You know, as many parents are discovering at the moment, teaching is a gift.

[30 : 03] You need to be patient and gentle. And that's something I need to learn as a temporary teacher. But, you know, what's remarkable about Jesus as our teacher is that we're told he's gentle, he's patient, he's loving, he doesn't raise his voice, he doesn't lose his temper.

No, when you're a disciple of the good teacher, when you're under the yoke with him, Jesus, he instructs you and guides you and directs you and counsels you and advises you with all gentleness and all humility.

And, you know, my friend, when you come to this Jesus and come under the yoke of Jesus, when you enroll in the school of Christ, it's not a one-off lesson. No, it's a lifelong lesson.

It's a lifetime of learning and following with Jesus. But, you know, the promise for every disciple of Jesus, the promise for every learner of Jesus is that he who began a good work in you, he will bring it on to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

My friend, Jesus is speaking to you this morning and he's speaking to you personally. And when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me. Listen to me.

[31 : 23] When Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me. Listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me.

And, you know, that was certainly true of the 19th century free church minister, Horatius Boner. You know, in 1846, only three years after the disruption, these words in Matthew 11, these words from the lips of Jesus, they spoke to Horatius Boner, encouraging him to write those well-known words. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast. And what was the response?

I came to Jesus. How did he come? As I was, weary and worn and sad. And I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad.

You know, my friend, can you say that today? Can you say that today that I have heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest.

[32 : 36] Because, my friend, Jesus is speaking to you this morning and he's speaking to you personally. And when Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me.

When Jesus speaks, he says, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me. So, my friend, you come to him and you come under his yoke and you become his disciple today because Jesus is speaking to you.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, may we give thanks to thee for these wonderful words that even though they were spoken in time many years ago, that they are still speaking to us today.

And Lord, we thank thee and we praise thee that these words are able to be written on our heart.

And we pray that we would hear Jesus like we have never heard him before, Lord, that when Jesus speaks, we would hear him speaking to us, listen to me, lean upon me and learn from me, that we

might come to him and come under his yoke and become his disciple, that we might follow after him all the days of our life.

O, we thank thee, Lord, that he is one who promises to be an ever-present help even in our times of trouble, that he is one who assures us that when we come to him, he will lift the load and he will bear the burden, he will carry our sorrows and that he will be with us in life and even with us through death.

[34 : 25] What a wonderful saviour we have and Lord, help us then to come to him not only today but every day, trusting in him for time and for eternity.

Keep us then, we pray, go before us, cleanse us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our time to a conclusion by singing the words of that psalm. We mentioned Psalm 46. The same word is used to describe a yoke where Jesus is our refuge and our strength. He is an ever-present help even in our times of trouble and Psalm 46 is a wonderful psalm that assures us that God is still with us.

We're singing Psalm 46 in the Scottish Psalter from the beginning down to the verse marked five. God is our refuge and our strength in straits a present aid. Therefore, although the earth remove, we will not be afraid.

These verses to God's praise. God is our man who has us stand in straits a present day.

[35 : 47] Therefore, although the earth be moved, we will not be afraid.

Though hills are mist the seas be cast, though waters roar in may and trouble be, yea, though the hills thy swelling seas through shame.

Our river is whose streams may plan the city of our God, the holy place where in the Lord most high hath is abode.

God in the midst of earth of twelve, nothing shall her remove.

the Lord to her and help her will and that rise early prove.

[37 : 39] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.