

## INTRODUCTION:

All of us here this morning, from time to time, probably appreciate receiving an invitation to something.

- Many times, invitations make us feel important. We appreciate being remembered.
- All of us have been invited to Daniel & Tiffani's wedding, and it is an honor to share that special day.
- I'm sure that most of us have been invited to a birthday party or a retirement celebration or any number of other special celebrations.

This morning, I would like for us to study an invitation that was given by Jesus in **Matthew 11**.

- We believe that the Bible is inspired, that it came to us from God, and that there is a reason why every Scripture has been preserved for us to read today.
- The invitation was originally given to those who were terribly repressed under Roman rule—their living conditions were significantly worse than ours are today—and yet the invitation certainly still applies.
- Please read with me, **Matthew 11:28-30**.

**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.”*

As we look back over these verses, we are amazed that the all-powerful God would want to take care of us!

- We are amazed that Jesus would make this offer.
- Out of all of the world's major religions, only the Christian faith makes such an offer.
- As we look at this invitation, I would like to divide the lesson into four parts—basically, by looking at four of the major action words in these three verses.

**I.** First of all, we hear Jesus say, **“COME.”**

In **verse 28**, Jesus says, *“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”*

- Literally, Jesus is saying, *“Come here!”* In other words, we are all welcome to come to Jesus Christ—regardless of income, or race, or language, or nationality.

I think back to all of the refugees from Cuba who, over the years, have made efforts to reach Florida.

- Back in February of 2004 a family modified a '59 Buick from a car into a boat.
- Back in July of 2003, they modified a '51 Chevy pickup truck.
- How many times has our nation said, **“No, you are not welcome.”**
- Some times these situations go to court cases and a lot of fuss is made when refugees arrive.
- We may disagree with one another on immigration policy, but the truth is, some people are not welcome in our nation.
- And yet the invitation from Jesus is clear—according to **verse 28**, **“all”** are welcome.

As we noticed earlier, this invitation was originally given to the Jews—those who were burdened down by the weight of the traditions of the elders.

- They were suffering under an overly restrictive religious system.
- Jesus addressed this in **Matthew 23:4**, concerning the Scribes and the Pharisees, where Jesus said, *“They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.”*

- In other words, the overly repressive religious leaders were unwilling to live even under their own rules. Jesus came to offer relief from that situation.

Not only is the invitation for everyone, but we also notice in **verse 28** that it requires some action on our part.

- We must accept the invitation.
- Jesus will never force himself into our lives, but we must actually come when we are invited.
- Jesus makes the free offer, and we are responsible for actually turning away from our sins.
- When we accept the invitation, Jesus is waiting there for us—ready to fulfill the offer.

We notice in **verse 28** that the invitation is specifically given to those who are **“weary and heavy-laden.”**

- It might appear at first that the invitation is given only to the poor or perhaps those who perform physical labor for a living, and yet it really has nothing to do with how we make a living.
- As I understand it, the word that is translated here as **“heavy-laden”** is a Greek word that was actually used to describe a boat that was so overloaded that it was about to sink.
- I think we all realize that it is possible for any of us to have a burden that we cannot bear alone.
- I think all of us have felt like that boat—so burdened down that we feel like we are taking on water, that we are about to sink.
- Perhaps we have an emotional or a spiritual burden.
- Perhaps we are carrying a burden that brings guilt and shame, because we know that we have sinned against God.
- Jesus is able to bear those burdens.
- Perhaps our minds are racing with all of the activities that we need to accomplish either at work or at home.

The Bible also describes the danger of becoming weary in our service to God.

- A special encouragement is found in **Galatians 6:9**, **“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”** Jesus can help us bear those burdens.
- Jesus is saying that if we are loaded down with burdens to the point where we feel like we are about to sink, He can help us in those situations.
- We can turn to the Lord and throw our burdens on Him.
- We are reminded of Peter’s words in **1 Peter 5:7**—Peter is writing about Jesus, and he refers to **“casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”**
- The Lord does not want us to be burdened.

Someone once described worry as **“a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”** How depressing!

- And yet Jesus is able to relieve us from all of our worries and cares. First of all, then, we are invited to **“Come”** to Jesus.

II. There is a second major action word in this invitation, and the word is **“TAKE.”**

In **verse 29**, Jesus says, *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am Gentle and humble in heart....”*

- Jesus invites us to take His yoke. He does not force it on anyone, but he offers it to everyone.
- We might wonder, **“Why in the world would we ever want to take on a yoke?”**
- Ultimately, Jesus says in **verse 29** that the yoke brings rest for our souls.
- The word that Jesus uses here refers to a double yoke that connects two oxen as they plow or carry a load.
- Normally, yokes are made out of wood, and they are very carefully designed in order to relieve any undue pressure on the animals, to make the plowing or whatever work is done as easy as possible.
- Yokes are still being used in many parts of the world.

Jesus is saying, therefore, that He is willing to share our load.

- His yoke is **“comfortable”** (as it literally says in **verse 30**), and He is willing to help us with our burden.
- At the end of **verse 29**, Jesus refers to finding **“rest,”** and yet we understand from the context that He is not necessarily speaking of a comfortable pillow and a fluffy blanket kind of rest. Instead, He is referring to the kind of rest that comes from using a tool that is specifically designed for a job—like using a can-opener instead of our teeth, or using a cordless drill instead of a hand-powered auger.
- Perhaps as riding a bike is easier than walking, Jesus is able to help us with our burdens.
- The burdens are not erased, but Jesus can help us when we need it.

Does anyone remember those baby holsters that were so commonly used back in the 90s?

- You still see them from time to time, however more than 15 years ago, when Katie was just a baby, our family had one of those and we carried Katie around like she was some kind of backpack or something. 😊
- We could have carried her in our arms, but as parents, we know that after a little while, even a 10 or 12 pound baby can get a little heavy.
- That carrier helped to evenly distribute the weight, and it made our job as parents a little easier.
- The yoke of Christ is kind of like that.

And yet, did you notice that Jesus did not say, **“Throw off all yokes.”?**

- We still have burdens, and the Christian life is still very hard, but we share the load with Christ.
- Compared to any other yoke in this life, the Christian life is still much easier.
- If we think the Christian life is difficult, compare it to the yoke of atheism, or humanism, or Darwinism.
- If we think it’s hard to be sober, compare that to being an alcoholic.
- If we think it is hard to be faithful to a spouse, compare that to being an adulterer.
- Life suddenly becomes very complicated.
- If we think it’s hard to avoid illegal drugs, compare that with being an addict.
- If we think it’s hard to be honest, compare that with being a liar.
- If we think it’s hard to go without a few things in this life, compare that with always striving for more and more and more.
- If we think that life with God is hard, we should just try to imagine it without Him.
- I agree with the words of a song that we occasionally sing, **“His yoke is easy, His burden is light. I’ve found it so, I’ve found it so!”**

When we are burdened down, therefore, we accept the invitation of Christ.

- We come to Him, and then we take on His yoke, allowing Him to bear our burdens together with us.
- We can unload on the Lord through prayer.

**III.** There is a third major action word in this short paragraph. We see in **verse 29** that we are invited to **“LEARN”** from the Lord.

If we are willing to come to the Lord, then we must also be willing to learn from Him.

- Most of us already know that the word **“disciple”** literally refers to a **“student”** or a **“learner.”**
- A disciple of Christ, then, is someone who is literally a student of the Lord.
- As Christians, we study the Lord. We learn from the Scriptures.

In this context (as a teacher), Jesus refers to himself as being **“gentle and humble in heart.”**

- We appreciate that attitude in a teacher.
- We want someone as our teacher who is **“gentle”** and **“humble.”**
- Instead of treating us harshly, he treats us with gentleness and humility.

I haven't seen one lately, but several years ago you might remember the commercials for Sears, where people were invited to, **“Come see the softer side of Sears.”**

- Sears had always been known for power tools and appliances and lawnmowers, but they had to soften that image to appeal to a different segment of the population.
- In a similar way, there are many sides to Jesus.
- On one hand, we sometimes read about Jesus as our Judge (and He will be our Judge at some point in the future), but in the meantime, He is gentle and is asking us to accept His invitation.
- **“Gentleness”** literally refers to **“power under control,”** and **“humility”** refers to putting the needs of others before our own.
- As we learn from Christ, we begin to see those qualities show up in our own lives.

When we think about **“learning”** from Jesus, we should remind ourselves that it's not exactly like the way we learn in college.

- Sometimes in college, we refer to **“cramming”** for an exam.
- Perhaps we get a 12-pack of Mountain Dew, perhaps we used to brew a pot of coffee, and then we plan on staying up all night studying for the big test.
- The Christian life is not like that.
- The progress is slow and steady—like a farmer working through the entire year.

And that is the third lesson we can learn. We come to Jesus, take the yoke, and learn from Him.

**IV.** There is a fourth and final action word I'd like for us to study. Jesus says that if we do these things, we will **“FIND”** something.

In **verse 29**, Jesus quotes from the Old Testament book of **Jeremiah**, and He says that we will **“find rest for our souls.”**

- When we get home from work in the evening, we want to rest.
- When we drive all day on a long trip, we want to rest.
- When we exercise for a while, we want to rest.
- But all of this fades in comparison to finding **“rest for our souls.”**
- It appears that Jesus is referring to the forgiveness of our sins—having all of our sins forgiven so we can find **“rest for our souls.”**

If we only need physical rest, we can take a nap.

- If we only need emotional rest, we can take a vacation.
- But the forgiveness of our sins only comes from Jesus.
- Peter was preaching about Jesus in **Acts 4:12**, when he said, *“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven than that which is given among men by which we must be saved.”*
- Jesus is the only one who can truly give us rest and peace for our souls.
- The amazing thing about all of this is that Jesus is giving us the invitation.
- He wants to give us rest. He wants to forgive our sins. He wants to share our burdens.

### **SUMMARY:**

- Here in **Matthew 11**, Jesus invites us to **COME to Him**.
- He invites us to **TAKE His yoke**—allowing Him to share our burdens.
- He invites us to **LEARN from Him**—that he is gentle and humble in heart.
- And He invites us to **FIND rest for our souls**.

### **CONCLUSION & INVITATION:**

This morning, we have studied one of the most famous invitations that Jesus ever gave during his life on earth.

- Every Sunday here at this congregation, we have the tradition of giving an invitation of our own.
- But really, the invitation is not our own.
- We invite anyone who has questions about Jesus to ask.
- We also invite anyone who is not a Christian the opportunity to obey the gospel.
- The Bible tells us that Jesus died for our sins, that He was buried, and that he actually came back from the dead.

We respond to that sacrifice in faith.

- Believing that God has the power to forgive our sins, we allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins.
- The Christian life begins at that point, and we go on to live and grow as God wants us to do.
- If you are ready to make that commitment, you can let us know by coming to the front as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...