

Matthew 11:28-30
January 5, 2020
New Year Resolution

Main Point: At the new year, many resolve to make a change in their lives. As an assessment of the past and of the goals and desires of our lives, these can be helpful. In this passage, Jesus speaks to those who want a good life. What will make you satisfied? What will make you successful? What will give you rest? Jesus claims that He will.

SI: New Year, New Year Resolutions

Much talk this week about New Year's Resolutions... *Resolved: rest more, exercise more, stop more, smile more, sing more, read more, pray more, hug more, engage more, move towards others more, fear less, yell less, eat less, drink less, stress less, work less (Tom Franklin)*

These can be good, but I chose this passage for this week, for this season, to help us go deeper and further in to something that is even more powerful than resolving to do something, and that is resolving to go to Jesus.

Read and pray.

Intro: Christmas and New Year holidays over... what have you found? What have they given you? What do you want to find in the New Year?

You know how Velcro works, right? One side has lots of tiny hooks, the other side has lots of tiny loops, so when you press them together, they stick.

We are walking around with hooks sticking out of our skin...(or Velcro) Our souls will hook into, latch onto all kinds of things that we believe will give us rest.

So of course Jesus knows this... so He takes it head on. 3 ways Jesus shows that He is the One. The One Answer to all our longings for rest. He knows you, He knows Himself, and He knows Rest.

1He knows You – 6 times you (plural)

What does He know about you?

Your burden

Your desires

He knows what the people are facing... Within the context, those who “labor and are heavy laden” is referring to the heavy load of religious observances that the scribes and Pharisees had been teaching. The Law of God, given as a good gift, had turned into a heavy burden. In order to be right with God, and to stay right with Him, the teachers had fallen for the ever present temptation: just do it. Here is the law, here are the rules, now go and obey.

As God has always taught, the Law, as summarized in the 10 Commandments, is a good gift. It shows us God's perfect holiness, it shows us our inability, and it drives us to see our need for a Savior.

But the rabbinic tradition had taken the Law of God and added minutiae upon minutiae. As one example, in order to keep the Sabbath holy (4th commandment), this regulation was added: "If a man took out anything in his right hand or in his left hand, and carried it on his shoulder, he is guilty; for this was the manner of carrying of the sons of Kohath. If he took it out with the back of his hand, or with his foot, or with his mouth or elbow, or carried it facing downwards or in his shirt or shoe or sandal, he is not guilty since he has not taken it out after the fashion of them that take out a burden." (*Shab. 10:3*, from Morris, 299.)

They thought that the additions to the law were actually helpful, when instead they were heavy burdens. Jesus knows. So in the next chapter, Jesus takes the Sabbath back. He restores the Sabbath as a day of celebration, of healing, of mercy.

The Law was never meant to be burdensome, but a gift! A gift to be enjoyed by the humble >

Psalm 19:7-11. Listen to what the Law does for the poor in spirit...

The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul... the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart... the rules of the Lord are true....more to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold...

What else does Jesus know about you, about us? He knows your today burdens. Jesus knows your human condition and the drive towards performance that is always lurking as a temptation... do this, achieve this, and you will find rest...

Look at what we have just been through > Christmas and New Years'. Christmas, this glorious gift of celebrating Christ, can devolve into pressure to get the perfect present, to fall for the god of materialism, or give in to gluttony. And then New Years' pressures to make resolutions to do better. Jesus knows our burdens.

Deeper, He knows our temptation and tendency towards self-dependence. From Adam and Eve on, we have fallen for the lie of selfish independence. I am pretty good, I can figure this out, I've got this.

And for us - one reason I chose this passage is b/c I see and hear of burdens you place on yourselves and the heaviness it brings to your lives.

Jesus knows our desires > He knows you desire rest. (trans to 2). And so He offers Himself.

2He knows Himself. > 5 times I or me referring to Himself. His character, His way, His path, rule, law.

Jesus knows who He is. This might seem obvious. I'm highlighting it because Jesus is making a stark contrast between Himself and the other options. Following Him is refreshment.

Becoming His disciple brings rest, relief, peace, ease, lightness. Following the religious way of attaining self-worth through religious observance is hard, harsh, heavy, laborious. Following your own way of self-attainment, self-glorification, self-accomplishment so that you are always winning—what a burden!

Story of well-known celebrity who cries in front of the mirror b/c of the pressure to keep up the performance. And the story of some of you who feel the pressure to perform on social media.

Who is He? The most confident and self-assured person who ever lived. Who could say this? Who could offer such a promise?

See v. 25 > Son of the Father

v. 27 > “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father...” > Authority and power.

Not only His power

The **character** of His power > This is the only place in the Gospel accounts where Jesus tells us of His own heart. He is contrasting Himself from the other teachers – and not just from the Jewish leaders... from any who draw attention away from Him and onto something or someone else.

He is nothing like the self-help book peddlers, the “Girl wash your face” or the “Man up and get your act together” purveyors.

In context of v. 25 > – “hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children” – see p. 293 Morris.

He is Not braggadocious, cocky, or arrogant. Not demanding or harsh. He is Gentle and lowly. Humble. Servant-hearted. Demonstrated over and over in how He lived, how He led. A bruised reed He will not break, a smoldering wick He will not snuff out. The Great Physician knows how to restore life to the broken, the weary, the heavy laden.

How does He heal, restore, bring life? By inviting us to take up His yoke. (trans to 3)
But His is easy and light.

Jesus knows you, He knows Himself, and last,

3He knows Rest. / *(Relief)*

One scholar suggests using the word ‘relief’ when talking about this rest. Relief from the heavy labors AND relief for your souls. “Relief from such crushing burdens as crippling anxiety, the sense of frustration and futility, and the misery of a guilty conscience” (Tasker in Morris, 297).

How to get this rest?

First let’s look at the many counterfeits to this rest.

**The easy to believe lies: You will find rest once you get it right. You have within you what you need to get what you want. Believe in yourself. Look out for number one b/c nobody cares

about you as much as you do about yourself. Only you can define what is right for you. As long as you are happy, you will be ok. If you get close enough to someone who has succeeded, you can share in theirs (idolatry of famous people). Busyness means I am important/significant.

Rest is Not Laziness, Rest is not doing nothing, vegging out. The world says work hard and live for the weekend. Live for work so that you can live to please yourself through entertainment and leisure.

Jesus contrasting two ways:

the way of faith in your performance, or the way of faith in His.

To the world, to your natural self, performance based living makes perfect sense. Most people double down on it. And live lives of intense self-focus or lives of hypocrisy... I am good enough, I am doing well enough, I compare myself to others less than me and I am measuring up well enough... but we know this is a game, a lie, a joke. Measure yourself against perfection and meet that!

ILLUS of Free Solo. ... Get it perfect, or die. And this is the same for Heaven's requirements. Will you live by faith in another's perfections, or will you die? Jesus says, "Repent, or perish."

Perform, Or Die.

Put on Christ, and Find Rest.

To take up a **yoke**

He uses the metaphor from agricultural labor – the yoke. A wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull.

The yoke upon the people was heavy and hard. Later Jesus says of their leaders (Mt. 23:4) > "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders..."

The yoke> designed for training oxen how to plow. An older, stronger, more experienced ox paired up with younger. The older bore the burden and did all the work while the younger walked along and pulled every which way.

This yoke then is a commitment you cannot get out of, requires giving yourself to His leadership, requires dying to your life direction and understanding. Yes, you must count the cost.

"He is ready to help all those who are themselves humble enough to admit their need of His mercy and grace. Indeed, He delights to do so." - Frank Thielman, ESV GTSB notes

And as you receive His gentle leadership, as you submit yourself to His teaching, you are enabled to work harder than you ever thought you could.

Example of **Joe Burrow** – LSU, Heisman Trophy winner - speech-... the rest and security and support and affirmation that the coaches gave him, enabled him to work hard and freed him up to be who he is... a gifted quarterback... This is us as we submit ourselves to Jesus.

Application: The Means of Grace for 2020. What is the practical action of ‘putting on Christ,’ taking on Christ? - The means of grace! Very simple... This is what grace does. Jesus is resolving, promising, to give you grace. What is grace? Undeserved, unearned favor and assurance.

*He is forcefully presenting the two ways of life and contrasting them: Ultimately life is up to your performance, or up to His. Where is your faith? In yourself, or in Him?

Your faith needs feeding, needs sustenance. For centuries the Church has taught us to tap into committing to learning from Jesus through the means of grace – His Word, prayer, His sacraments, and worship.

Bible reading plan.

Prayer – every day – help me with my unbelief, Lord! And fighting off the lies!

Commitment to being at worship services... being here as often as you are able – teaching yourself and your family that worship is the highest priority of your life b/c here is the feast of your week to strengthen your weariness and enjoy His easy and light burden.

Why is His yoke easy and light?

Conc: He is the Sabbath Rest... He is Sabbath. He is Rest. Look at what He has done. He took up the burden, the literal crosspiece of the yoke, and placed it upon Himself. To purchase your rest, your relief from the heavy burdens of perfection!

He is inviting you to make a New Year Resolution to go to Him. To take Him up on His invitation. To assess your busy lives and your involvements. To discover what really is most important to you, and take it to Him.

ILLUS of David Letterman show when he launches himself onto the Velcro wall

You’ve got Velcro hooks all over your body. Take a running leap and launch into Jesus. He will hold you up.

Bene: Jude 24-25

Small Group Questions from Matthew 11:28-30

Read the passage from Matthew 11:25-30.

What are New Year's Resolutions like for you? Do you make them? Have you made them in the past?

What are some of the reasons people make New Year's Resolutions? How can seeking to improve things be healthy spiritually and how can it be not healthy for us spiritually?

If Jesus knows us – how we are made, what our burdens are, what our desires are – in what ways does that comfort you? In what ways does it discomfort you or challenge you?

Consider Jesus' claims here – who could say this? What power and authority is Jesus claiming to have? What difference does this make in your everyday life?

How does knowing and believing that Jesus is 'gentle and lowly' in heart affect your relationship with Him? How does it draw you towards Him? In what ways does it lead you to deeper repentance and deeper trust?

What is Rest for you? What kind of Rest does Jesus offer? How does that appeal to you?

What do you think about the means of grace (Bible reading, prayer, sacraments, worship)? How have you experienced them in the past? How can we pray for one another and explore healthy accountability with one another in these?