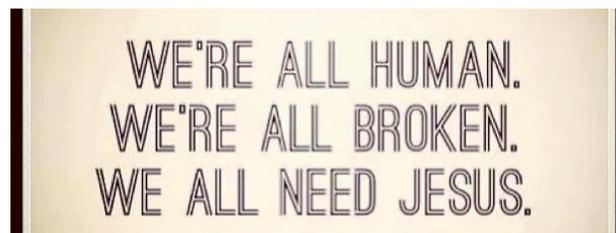


Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

Psalm 45:11-18

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew 11:16-30



YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS

Matthew 11:16-19. *“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, ¹⁷‘We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”¹*

- *“It is like children ...”* (v.16). Jesus came to a generation that frequently acted like a bunch of selfish “playmates.” Our present generation is no different. John (the Baptist) was austere and told everyone they were sinners. Jesus ran with the wrong crowd and showed everyone how righteous living could be better than sin. Some of the people weren’t pleased with either John or Jesus, and likewise today, there are people no one can please. People like that do not understand the bottom line: *“Wisdom is justified by her deeds.”*

Matthew 11:20-24. *Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”*

- *“Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida!”* (v.21). There is no question about the meaning of this passage. Chorazin and Bethsaida, and especially Capernaum, which was “home” to Jesus (Matt 4:12), were all places where Jesus had done miracles, yet many were rejecting him. These were his own people, his kinsmen, and yet they, of all people, were less open to the gospel than were foreigners like Samaritans and people in Phoenician cities (Tyre and Sidon) – the Canaanite woman in Matt 15:21-28, for example.

A *day of judgment* (v.24) lies ahead for all men. Every society, Christian or not, agrees with the saying, *“Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more”* (Luke 12:48). According to Romans 7, especially v.9-10, when we were given knowledge of the law, we became aware of our sin and guilt. And when we were given the gospel (Romans 8:1-8), we became aware of what we must do to avoid judgment and eternal punishment. Knowing these things, we are thus among those “to whom much is given,” and the conclusion is obvious.

We therefore cannot say what will become of the one who has heard neither the law nor the gospel, and worships another god. His end probably depends on the nature of his god. But we can say that the man who goes to church every Sunday, and sits on the vestry, but has never repented and has no personal saving faith in Jesus, is in even greater danger on account of his good works and standing in the church.

Matthew 11:25-30. *At that time Jesus declared, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; ²⁶ yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

¹ Bible quotations are from the RSV.

• “*I thank thee ... that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes*” (v.25). The NLT version is, “... *thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever ...*”. The intellectuals – the scribes and Pharisees – took pride in themselves. They looked down on Jesus rather than up to him. But many others were able to believe he was who he said he was. In other words, intelligence per se is not the problem; neither is illiteracy the solution. It is *pride*, not intelligence, that separates men from God and each other, and it is *humility*, not illiteracy, that allows God to reveal himself to men, and opens the way for peace and good will among us.

• “*All things have been delivered to me by my Father*” (v.27). This is the first of three great messianic claims in v.27. It is like Matt 28:18, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*” See also John 3:35, “*The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.*”

The second messianic claim in v.27 is, “*No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son.*” Christians believe this is intended to mean the Father and Son are manifestations of the one and only God, as when Jesus said to the Jews in the temple, “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30).

Christ’s third messianic claim in v.27 is in the words, “... *and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*” Jesus claimed authority to *choose* those to whom he would reveal the Father. You can see him exercising this authority throughout the gospels, as when he chose the apostles, or asked the woman at the well for a drink in John 4, or said to his disciples, “*Do not cast your pearls before swine*” (Matt 7:6).

There is no way to maneuver around these claims. There are plenty of similar assertions in the NT: “*No one comes to the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6); “*There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12); etc.

The unbelieving world does not understand Jesus in the sense of Matt 11:27, and is deceived in sin. “*The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me*” (John 16:2-3). Today these words are as relevant as ever as the shadow of Islam moves over Europe and the western world.

• “*Come to me ...*” We can hear about Jesus and read about him, and try our best to be kind and gentle and lowly in heart as he is, but these things cannot cleanse us from sin. Many are satisfied just to be charitable and come to church and hear about Jesus, but there is a big difference between (1) hearing about Jesus, and (2) receiving Jesus personally. You must close the gap. You must come to him.

• “... *all who labor and are heavy laden ...*” People *labor* under three kinds of burdens: burdens from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil. First there are burdens laid on people by the world. For the Jews, burdens were laid on by the Romans and also by the scribes and Pharisees. Speaking of the latter, Jesus said, “*They preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger.*” (Matt 23:2-4).

Second, there are burdens of the flesh – the accidents and illnesses we hope to avoid, which nevertheless come upon us from time to time – burdens that grow heavier with age. In Galatians 6 Paul wrote, “*Bear one another's burdens,*” and he also wrote, “*Each man will have to bear his own load.*” In other words, some trials and afflictions can be shared with one’s friends; others must be borne alone.

Third, there is the burden of pride, and all the sin that stems from pride and self-sufficiency. You may believe you can save yourself, that is, you can justify yourself and prove your worthiness to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Or you may try to hide in the dark and selfish shadows of life and pretend, “I’m OK.” Or you may hear, as we have just read, that Jesus chooses those to whom he will reveal himself, and say, “I don’t believe he has chosen me, so I’ll just go my own way.” These – the burdens of pride and selfishness – are burdens we have permitted the devil to lay upon us. Come to Christ, and he will lift them from you.

• “... *and I will give you rest.*” This is *the rest of forgiveness* – the first kind of *rest* Jesus offers to those who come to him. Come to Christ, confess your selfishness and sins to him, and he will forgive all. Come to the One who has surrendered his life to pay the price of your sins, and now offers redemption and *rest* forever.

• “... *rest for your souls.*” Here is the permanent, God-given kind of *rest* – the peace that passes understanding – the result of *being yoked together* with Jesus and *learning from him*. May you experience this *rest* even now in Jesus Christ – *rest* for your soul, and *rest* unto eternal life.