

**Jesus Invites Us to Come to Him**

- 1. Only He Can Lead us to the Father**
- 2. Only He Can Give us Rest for our Souls**

As he sat in the waiting room, his short legs hanging high above the floor, his Dad, his hero, the one in whom he put all his trust, put his arm around his shoulders and said, "it's going to be ok, buddy. This is for your good! This will help you not get sick. It won't hurt a bit!" But he was having a hard time feeling reassured. The thought just kept creeping into his head. "This doesn't make any sense." As he sat in the doctor's office, watching a strange man in a long white coat pull a sharp needle out of a drawer, hundreds of thoughts swirled in his tiny head. "This doesn't make any sense. This guy's going to stab a needle in my arm and it's supposed to be the best way? It's supposed to be for my good?" Finally, as the doctor moved towards him to poke the needle into his arm, the boy lost his composure. He shouted out, "Wait! Stop! Please! Can't we do something else? Yeah! How about we try something different?"

Some people yell the same thing when looking for God and spiritual security. They seek to find a way that makes more sense to their reason. Something concrete that they can point to and say, "I get that! I can do that!" But it's not just "other" people. How often do we find ourselves looking for some other way? How often do we put Jesus on the back burner? In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus invites us to see that there is only one way!

**Jesus Invites Us to Come to Him**

- 1. Only He Can Lead us to the Father**
- 2. Only He Can Give us Rest for our Souls**

We would have hoped the state of God's people would have been better. But they were in sorry shape. The religious leaders and teachers of the Law laid the focus on how they themselves could earn eternal life in Heaven, by carefully and precisely following all of the teachings of the Law. The teachers of the Law and the religious group known as the Pharisees convinced the people that only a select group could make it to Heaven, and in order to be a part of that group, they would need to work hard, constantly straining to keep the Law. But the Pharisees didn't only preach that people needed to keep God's Law perfectly. They added hundreds of man-made laws which people also needed to follow. One regulated the number of steps a person could take on the Sabbath. Others regulated how people were to wash dishes, or their hands. Shortly after this, the Pharisees confronted Jesus and his disciples, just for healing a man on the Sabbath!

Jesus knew about this situation, and he saw it first hand as he carried out his ministry. At first people welcomed him with open arms. Little by little, however, they went back to the teachings of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. His disciples had felt this same rejection on a missionary journey. Jesus was sitting with them one day when he started to pray.

**"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. "**

God hates sin. In Genesis, we see God create the world without sin. It was not his intention for mankind to be sinful. But his creation didn't stay this way. Adam and Eve committed the first sin in the Garden, fracturing the perfect relationship between God and his creation.

But God had a plan. With a promise to Adam and Eve, and a warning to Satan, God showed that he would solve this new problem of sin by sending a Savior! Just as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold, God would lay on him all sins. This Savior would repair the broken relationship between God and sinners.

However, God knew that the wise and learned would never accept his plan. Jesus doesn't mean that no one who had any sort of education could accept God's plan to buy back sinners through Christ. Rather, he is referring to people, such as the Pharisees, who put their trust in themselves and their works. Their focus was only on following the Law, and the idea of being saved without doing anything seemed ridiculous. As Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians, **"the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing."**

But God revealed his plan to little children, that is, those who had a childlike faith in God. These people plainly and simply believed that this Savior would save them from sin. A child will willingly let their father toss them high into the air, or jump from the edge of a pool into their father's arms without any fear or doubt. They fully trust their father to do what he has promised. "I'll catch you!" As a child trusts their parent's word, these followers of Jesus believed

everything that had been prophesied and taught about the coming Savior, through faith worked in them by the Holy Spirit.

After praising God for revealing his plan to “little children”, Jesus turned to his followers and explained to them that he was that sin bearer, the seed of the woman that God sent. He said, **“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son.”** He would reunite a loving Father with his faithful children. He would perfectly keep the Law for those who couldn’t. No one else could be in perfect unity of will with the Father except for the Son. What the Father wanted, the Son wanted the same.

Christ explained that only through the work that he would do could mankind see a loving Father. Only he could repair the broken relationship between sinful man and God. We sense the urgency in Jesus voice. Come to me, before it’s too late! I’m the only one who can bring you to the Father.

Jesus is the only way to the Father. But how many religions are there in the world? How many different denominations of churches in this town alone? All these religions are looking for a way to God, but if they try any other way than through Jesus, they won’t be finding the God they want. Rather, they will come face to face with an angry, judging God. Many people will argue that as long as you’re sincere, and truly believe in whatever you believe in, it doesn’t matter. We’ll all end up in Heaven. How those thoughts spit in the face of God’s word here!

As believers, we have all come to Jesus in faith, but how often do we find ourselves pushing Christ to the backburner, like he isn’t all that important? How often do you find yourself skipping church on Sundays in order to enjoy the other things in your life? How often do you find yourself passing up prayer, or time spent studying his Word, in order to catch an extra 15 minutes of sleep, or to get ahead in the business world? Do we find ourselves saying, “God will always be there for me, so I can turn my focus elsewhere.”

How dangerous is this attitude in life! If you push Jesus out of the picture, if you begin to rely on yourself, you’re playing with fire. Without Jesus, we lose the connection to our loving Father, and are faced with the angry judge who sees only our sin, declaring us guilty. This isn’t what Jesus wants! Come to him, because only he can lead us to the Father.

Attempting to come to God in any way besides through Jesus is like trying to reach a destination on a treadmill. You can run as hard and long as you can, drink the most expensive sports drinks and wear the newest Nikes, but in the end, you’re in the same spot where you started. We know that only Jesus can lead us to the Father. He unplugs the treadmill, picks us up in his arms, carries us to the Father, and enfolds us in peace and rest.

Jesus taught his followers that he alone could lead them to the Father. He also taught them that only he is able to give them true spiritual rest. He tenderly invites them, **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** By what were they burdened?

Every single person on the earth is under the Law. From the beginning of creation, God told mankind that the wages of sin is death. One sin caused death, and every person since that sin has inherited a sinful nature which desires to do nothing but evil.

The religious teachers gave God’s people the impression that they needed to work hard and toil under the Law in order to keep it, and that it was all up to them. It was a futile effort for these men and women. They felt the weight of their sins, and the Law became a heavy burden on them, growing as they tried to earn Heaven. The people were getting nowhere! Regardless of their hard work and effort, they remained dead in their sin.

If that wasn’t enough, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law didn’t comfort the people. They added more weight to the burdened hearts of the people, attaching more man-made laws to follow. Impossibility was heaped on top of impossibility, and then preached as the only way. How could anyone stand, let alone find rest?

Finally, these poor sheep without a shepherd were taught the only way to find spiritual rest. Jesus invited his followers to **“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.”**

In many cases, the term “yoke” makes one think of a heavy load, something difficult to bear. However, Jesus’ yoke reminds us of its function. This piece of wood was shaped and designed to take some of the pressure from the shoulders of the beasts of burden, making the load easier to carry. But Jesus yoke not only makes the load easier to carry, it removes the weight entirely!

Jesus’ yoke is the trustworthy Gospel, the full forgiveness of sins. Christ lived a sinless life on earth as our substitute, bearing the heavy yoke of the Law for sin-stained mankind. As that prophesied sin bearer, Christ carried all sin to the cross. He died and was raised again as the perfect sacrifice for every man, woman, and child. Because he so lovingly would carry this impossible burden for men, Jesus gave his followers spiritual rest, free from the worry and burden that the Law was putting on them. Believers also found peace and rest because Jesus would repair that broken

bridge between God and his people. No longer would they be faced with an angry judge, but would be wrapped in the warm embrace of their loving Father.

If you've ever weightlifted, you've probably heard the advice to always lift with a spotter! A spotter stands nearby and is ready to grab the weight if your tired muscles give out. The spotter grants peace of mind, as the lifter knows there is someone there to help when they're in trouble. In Christ, we have the perfect spotter. However, like some macho, muscle bound meathead do you often find yourselves not using him? Do you rely on your own strength? Without him, we get crushed beneath the heavy weight of our burdens.

Do we ever doubt that God's plan to save us can actually work? "There's no such thing as a free lunch. What's the catch?" The devil whispers in our ear that we're good enough without Jesus. We can do it on our own. Look how often I go to church! Look how often I pray! Look how big of an offering I give! And while that little voice of pride whispers in your one ear, "You're good enough! There is another way!" the other little voice of your conscience whispers, "look at all the horrible things you've done in your life! There's no way that God can forgive you for that!" We are burdened with self-reliance and doubt.

We need rest and peace from that burden! But rather than listening to Jesus, and taking his weightless yoke, we instead rely on earthly things to try and find peace. "When I've made enough money, I'll finally be able to relax." "As long as I'm doing the things I like to do, I'll be at peace." "Let me do whatever I want, and then I'll be happy." But none of these things bring lasting peace. This sinful world always squashes our earthly peace.

Only through Christ can we find true rest and peace for our souls. In the knowledge that he has done all things for us, we are able to find peace. When the Devil tells us that we can never do enough to make up for our sins, we smile and say that all of our sins were borne on the strong back of our Savior, and are forgiven. When troubles flair up in life, we turn our eyes to our loving God, who promises to be with us and take care of us. We turn our eyes to Heaven, knowing that when these days of sorrow on earth are over, we will have eternal peace in the mansions of Heaven

So often in life we find ourselves acting like Pharisees, relying only on ourselves, thinking that we can do enough to earn Heaven. We try and do good things to make up for the bad we've done, and think that there are different ways to get to God. So often, we find ourselves weary and burdened beneath the weight of the law. When we find ourselves in situations like this, don't scream out "There has to be some other way!" like the little boy at the doctor. Instead, stop crying out. Still your beating heart, and trust fully in the promise and invitation of our Savior. "Come to me!" Take comfort in these words. Only He can lead us to the Father. Only He can give us rest for our souls. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen.