
Rest: Found Only in Christ (Matthew 11:25-30)
7/23/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



Ted has been going to church for a while now. Ted's been studying his Bible, and he's started to notice something. Christians aren't acting like the Bible says they should! So Ted decides he's gonna be a real Christian. Ted decides that real Christians bring people to Christ. So Ted says that real Christians are only those who convert people.

This scenario has played out within the Christian church time and again for centuries. Someone looks at Christians and notices that Christians are not actually living like God demands. And so they decide that real Christians focus on charity, or real Christians focus on evangelism, or real Christians read this much of their Bible this much of the day. In the end, they ignore God's Word which tells us that we have a totally corrupt sinful nature, even as Christians. They set up a false Christianity that says salvation requires our works, not faith in Christ alone. If you have ever felt that you don't believe enough, or that God could never forgive your sins, you have felt the influence of this false teaching.

In fact, every false teaching, every false religion, every human ideology tries ultimately to focus us on our works, our efforts, our decisions. Christianity, however, turns us away from ourselves and toward Christ. In Matthew 11, Jesus shows us the absolute uniqueness of Christianity taught in its truth and purity: that we are saved by nothing we do, but only by what Christ did. Today, Jesus gives us spiritual rest; something that can only be found in Christ.

In Jesus' first words in verse 25, Jesus praises God for hiding spiritual truth from the wise and learned and yet giving those truths to little children. How? Let's look at the rest of Jesus' words and come back.

Jesus has full authority over all things, so he has a right to speak on this subject. People more acquainted with the facts and the truth do have more authority to speak on those facts and truths than other people. A doctor has more of a right to speak about the human body than I do, because he has studied it and I haven't. He has more experience with it than I do. Doesn't make me less of a human. He simply has authority on that particular subject. In those places where I disagree with my doctor regarding the human body, it's probably wise to take his side, rather than stick to my

inexperience and lack of education on the subject. There may be times when I'm right, but he will probably be correct more often than not.

Jesus here claims authority over everything. As God, Jesus has that claim. As God, he understands all things more than you and me, more than anyone. Unlike the doctor, when I disagree with Jesus, he will be right 100% of the time.

Now this is what Jesus, the leading authority on everything, says: No one even knows the Son except the Father, and no one even knows the Father except the Son. Only God even knows who the true God is. And therefore, we can only know God if he reveals himself to us.

This is what Jesus was talking about before. The world is filled with very wise, intelligent, and learned people. There are absolutely brilliant people who are atheists, Muslims, even false teachers in Christian churches. But for all their knowledge and insight, they don't know who the true God is. For all their learning and aptitudes, they remain in the delusion that they can know God better by their own works and efforts.

There is only one way for us to even know the true God: the Son must reveal him to us. That eliminates all our efforts! Salvation is a matter of our relationship with God and that cannot come by anything we do, because no matter how hard we work, we cannot start a relationship with someone we don't even know! Christ must reveal God to us and at that point, our relationship with God is secured, because Jesus reveals God as the One who saves us through Christ alone, revealed to us in Scripture alone, and received not through our efforts but through faith alone, which God must work in us.

The wise and learned of the world call the gospel "cheap grace." They reject full and free salvation in Jesus and try to add laws as the way to heaven. They paint a caricature of "real Christians" and hypocritically assert themselves as truly good. And so they reject God's grace, because they believe it too easy.

But Jesus chooses to reveal himself to little children, even to infants who cannot do a thing for themselves. In baptism, Jesus puts faith in the hearts of even the smallest of children, revealing the Father to them and bringing them into that saving relationship with God.

This pleased God. He created salvation for us in a way that is all on him. We cannot contribute in ANY way to our salvation. It is Jesus and Jesus alone.

So, do you feel weary because of the depths of your sins? Do you feel burdened by relentless demands of God's laws? Last week, we talked about how we as Christians are totally dedicated to Christ. Are you weighed down by your failure to put Christ first this past week? If you don't feel that burden, compare your life to God's law. Have you loved God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind? Have you loved your neighbor as yourself? God's law demands that you be holy, and you certainly are not that. The more we look at God's law, the more we find ourselves to be hypocrites, liars, petty, and (to say it simply) sinners.

But if you do feel that burden, if you do recognize your utter failure at being faithful to God, if you do see your inability to be who God demands that you be, then come to Jesus. Jesus will give you rest.

Think of the Sabbath day. Think of the 3rd commandment: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. God gave the Jews the Sabbath day, Saturday, as a day when they had to rest from work, and instead spend that time going to their God to receive real spiritual rest. When they went to the temple, they would see the sacrifices offered by the priests, sacrifices connected to God's promises that he would forgive their sins. In those sacrifices blood was shed so that the people would not have to pay the price for their sins. Through this, God assured his people that their sins were forgiven; that they had a right relationship with God in spite of their many sins.

You and I find that rest, not in animal sacrifice, but in *the* Sacrifice to which those Old Testament sacrifices pointed: Jesus Christ. Every lamb those priests killed pointed to the Lamb. Jesus Christ died on the cross to fully pay for our sins, not to give us a start that we need to finish, not to set us on the right track and now we need to keep up with it, but to finish our salvation.

Jesus calls us to carry his yoke on ourselves and to learn from him, to be disciples by him. What do we learn from Jesus? How does he disciple us? He teaches us that he is gentle and humble of heart, or, said another way, Jesus is meek and subservient in heart. How so? Jesus humbly and meekly obeyed his Father's

will; his Father's will that Jesus set aside the full use of his power and glory as God to become human; his Father's will that Jesus be totally obedient to God's will as he lived in our place; his Father's will that Jesus go to the cross to pay the full price for our sins through his death.

This is the yoke we carry as Christians. This is the burden we bear, and what yoke could be easier to wear? What burden could be lighter to bear? The weight of the yoke Jesus puts on us is insignificant, because he has done all the heavy lifting.

This is the rest Christ brings for our souls. We recognize that our best efforts, the highest accomplishments of our wisdom and learning, the greatest achievements of our resolutions and good works, all of them get us nowhere before God. They only serve to push us closer to hell.

But Christ reveals himself as the God who forgives us, who takes away all of our sins, who makes the most unworthy sinner God's own child, who makes the spiritually helpless into God's chosen saints.

So give up whatever other yokes you carry. Give up whatever other burdens have been placed on you; the burden of being a "good Christian," the burden of being a good parent, or child, or citizen, the burden of being a good person. Give up the burden of guilt you feel over your past failures and your present struggles. Give up the yoke of Satan's lies. Give up your yokes and take the one Christ gives, and you will find rest for your soul. Amen.