



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 11:25-30

Topic

Your life is compared to a field that is being plowed by you and Jesus as if you were yoked together

Title

"Different Yokes for Different Folks"

Introduction

I was looking at the instruction book that came with my Frigedaire oven so I could be sure I had the temperature calibrated just right for Thanksgiving.

I discovered that my oven has a Sabbath mode. If your oven isn't too old, it probably has one, too.

What is Sabbath mode? I'd heard of it before, and assumed it was something that would keep you from using your oven during the hours of the Sabbath. Just the opposite!

1 of 15

Matthew 11:25-30

"Different Yokes for Different Folks"

Listen to this description:

While raw food may not be cooked on the Sabbath, food that was already cooked beforehand may be kept warm until mealtime [and] food may be cooked fresh - but turning the heat on is prohibited [because it is considered kindling a fire, one of the 'works' you may not do on the Sabbath]. In the past, the problem could be solved simply by lighting a stove or oven before the Sabbath began, and leaving it on. In recent decades, however, appliance manufacturers have instituted a safety feature that automatically shuts off the heat after a number of hours. This renders the appliance useless for those who observe these religious laws.

When an oven is in Sabbath mode, the standard six- or twelve-hour automatic shutoff is overridden [and the consumer may thereby use the oven without technically kindling a fire].

Refrigerators also pose Sabbath problems. Those who try to 'keep' the Sabbath (called Sabbatharians) are not supposed to open the refrigerator door from sundown Friday through sundown Saturday. If they do, the door switch completes an electrical current, turning on the light - **and completing an electrical current is considered kindling a fire.**

Modern technology has again come to the rescue:

[In Sabbath mode] the consumer does not have to worry about lights, digits, icons, tones, alarms, solenoids or fans being activated or deactivated when opening or closing the [refrigerator] door. A built-in delay prevents [these] from turning on immediately after the door is opened.

Appliance manufacturers had to work hard so Sabbatarians could 'rest.'

Truth is, anyone trying to 'rest' on the Sabbath according to these kinds of religious rules will find it exhaustingly hard work.

The work it took to rest on the Sabbath was an unbearable burden for the Jews in the first century as well. The scribes and the Pharisees kept heaping more-and-more rules and regulations upon the people, offering them no help bearing them.

To those Sabbath-weary, worn-out people, Jesus said,

Mat 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 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.

Mat 11:30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus takes us out of the realm of exhausting religious practices and into the reality of an endearing relationship with Himself.

These are among the most compassionate, the most powerful, the most merciful and wonderful words ever to fall from the lips of our Lord.

Listen to Him carefully as I organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Shows You How Rest Works, and #2 Jesus Saves You To Rest From Works.

#1 Jesus Shows You How Rest Works

(v25-26)

By "how rest works" I mean that before Jesus *defines* rest for you in verses twenty-seven through thirty, He *demonstrates* rest for you in verses twenty-five and twenty-six.

In the preceding verses Matthew began to tell us that Jesus' offer to establish the kingdom of Heaven on the earth, as its King, is going to be rejected by the vast majority of the Jews. Although announced by John the Baptist in the Spirit and power of Elijah, and although Jesus displayed all the miraculous credentials of the "Coming One," no kingdom would come.

It still hasn't come.

How do *you* react when everything you've been doing for God seems to result in failure?

Jesus rested in the ultimate will and plan of God.

Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

Jesus wasn't thankful that "the wise and the prudent" were rejecting the Gospel. He was thankful that God was not to be thwarted in His promise to eventually establish the kingdom. If some rejected Jesus, others would receive Him.

Before we further analyze what Jesus said, listen to how He said it. He said, "I thank You" to His Father. The words translated "I thank You" mean "I **acknowledge** You." A language scholar said, "the person praying "acknowledges" who God is, the propriety of his ways, and the excellence of His character. At that point acknowledgment is scarcely distinguishable from praise."

"Propriety" means God always acts according to His excellent character, which is pure and perfect.

Jesus acknowledged His Father. Even though seemingly things were not going according to plan, Jesus was confident that God had not changed. He would keep His Word - fulfill His promises.

It's a pretty big deal to acknowledge God. Instead of blaming God when things seem to be going wrong, I can acknowledge He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that He remains pure and perfect and is at work and will redeem all things for the good.

There was, indeed, a change in plan for Jesus' ministry. This is the moment in Jesus' ministry where we see that the Gospel will extend beyond Israel, beyond the Jews, to the Gentiles, to the whole world. In a moment He will invite "all" men to Himself.

The Jews to whom Jesus had been sent (and especially the leaders) considered themselves "wise and prudent." We would say they were self-righteous and, therefore, self-sufficient. They were only interested in the kingdom of Heaven if they did not need to repent to enter it. They thought they deserved it.

In contrast to the self-righteous, self-sufficient Jews who refused to repent, there were others who would eagerly welcome the Gospel. They saw their need.

Jesus said of God the Father that He had "**hidden** these things from the wise and prudent." Some people read "hidden" as if they never had any hope of receiving The Lord because God was somehow hiding the truth from them.

There is no good reason to read the words that way.

Jesus and His twelve disciples had gone around preaching the Gospel giving *everyone* who heard them the opportunity to repent and believe. No one would read about their evangelistic campaign and not think it was a sincere offer of salvation to whosoever would believe.

It was only "hidden" in the sense that they refused to respond to the grace of God. Thus they could not see what God was showing them.

There is no teaching here, or to my understanding, anywhere, in the Bible that some people **cannot** believe and be saved; only that they **will not** believe and be saved.

Salvation is all of grace. By His grace, God frees the will of a man to be able to respond to His offer of salvation.

Why do some respond positively while others do not? The mystery of human responsiveness to the Gospel is known only to God and the persons making their choices. One commentator did make this observation:

It is not for us to attempt to explain why some receive and believe the Gospel, while others do not... But one thing... stands out in Scripture as a great practical truth to be remembered always. Those from whom the Gospel is hidden are generally "the wise in their own eyes."

It is an after-the-fact observation, but the self-righteous who feel self-sufficient are often those who reject salvation by grace through faith, refusing to humble themselves.

Mat 11:26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

By "sight" I think The Lord was referring to His Father's *oversight*. No matter the obstacles, and the apparent change of course, God was exercising His oversight, ruling the universe by His providence, working all things together for the "good."

This is pretty deep stuff, really. John the Baptist had announced that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand and that Jesus was the "Coming One" in fulfillment of the prophecies. The Lord went about offering to establish the kingdom on the earth and proving His right to its throne by performing so many signs, wonders and miracles that if they were all written down, the world could not contain the books.

The Jewish leaders, and ultimately the vast majority of Jews, rejected all that. **Jesus reacted by resting in God** - knowing that because of God's pure and perfect character He would redeem it, working all things out to the ultimate good.

Before Jesus described spiritual rest, He demonstrated it. It is, at least in part, the acknowledgement that God's plans and purposes will not and cannot ultimately fail because God's character is perfect and pure and He always acts accordingly.

Furthermore, it is not a reluctant or sorrowful acknowledgement. It is a joyful one, a thankful one.

That's the part I struggle with, and that keeps me from truly resting in God. Nevertheless His rest is there for me, and for you, at all times.

#2 Jesus Saves You To Rest From Works

(v27-30)

The Jews were spiritually weary. They struggled under an enormous load of religious legalities that were laid upon them by their spiritual leaders. The rules for the Sabbath alone were an incredible burden that they were called upon to bear.

Today there are thirty-nine categories of activities that cannot occur from sundown Friday through sundown Saturday.

Not thirty-nine activities; thirty-nine categories, each with many activities. Let me give you one more example. So that you do not have to push a button, which would complete an electrical circuit violating a Sabbath rule, there are Sabbath elevators that stop at every floor.

I don't want to be totally insensitive to folks who think they should 'keep' the Sabbath, but I've got to say this.

Do we really think that keeping the refrigerator door closed from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday is what God had in mind

when He told us to rest? Or not turning on the oven? Or using an elevator that stops at every floor?

Isn't it just a little deceptive and disingenuous to then figure out a way in which we *can* open the door or cook or ride the elevator without violating the Sabbath?

All those rules and regulations are works laid upon you by which you think you are obeying God. Jesus establishes that He saves you and then you rest from works in an empowered relationship with Him.

Mat 11:27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

This is strong language saying that Jesus is the only way to know God. There is no other religion, and no other relationship, by which you can be saved. God the Father and Jesus are one and the only way to know God is to have Him revealed to you by Jesus.

I like the way one commentator expanded this verse when he said,

"All things have been committed to" Him. He carries the keys: to Him we must go for admission into heaven. He is the door: through Him we must enter. He is the Shepherd: we must hear His voice and follow Him if we do not want to perish in the wilderness. He is the Physician: we must apply to Him if we want to be healed of the plague of sin. He is the bread of life: we must feed on Him if we want to have our souls satisfied.

He is the light: we must follow Him if we do not want to wander in darkness. He is the fountain: we must wash in His blood if we want to be cleansed and made ready for the great day of account.

Who does the "Son" **will** "to reveal [God the Father]?" While it is clear from this verse that no person on his or her own has the ability to know God unless God acts to reveal Himself, it does not follow that He only reveals Himself to a chosen few.

We learn elsewhere in the Bible He wills to reveal Him to "whosoever" will believe in Him (John 3:16). We are told Jesus is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe (First Timothy 4:10).

These next three verses tell us the same thing as Jesus extends His invitation to "all" men everywhere.

Mat 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 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.

Do you feel burdened? Overwhelmed? Defeated? Do you ever say things like, "I can't take it anymore?"

When you do, **this is what Jesus says to you.**

One thing we need to understand from the beginning is that He does not promise to remove burdens. He promises to carry them with you. Spiritual rest will allude you if your idea of rest is that your trials or troubles or tragedies must be removed.

Theologians notice a progression here as Jesus says "come," then "take," then "learn."

- "Come" is the general, universal invitation to all men. The human race is burdened by sin and its guilt and is laboring to merit acceptance with God. We must quit our own works and rest in His work on the Cross on our behalf.
- "Take" tells us that salvation is a gift but, like any gift, it must be received in order to become effective. No one can come to God unless God reveals Himself to them, but by grace that is exactly what Jesus does for all men. This is that mysterious moment when the grace-freed will must decide.
- "Learn" encourages us that once we have responded to the grace of God and received The Lord He will lead us moment-by-moment and day-by-day until the work He has begun is completed.

In describing Himself as "gentle and lowly in heart," The Lord is saying that His leading is never *religious*; it is always *relational*. Even when there are precepts and principles that must be followed, it is because of your relationship with The Lord, not because you are under a set of rules.

Notice the double use of the word "rest:"

1. Jesus says "I will **give** you rest" - that is the peace *with* God that accompanies salvation.
2. Then He says "you will **find** rest" - that is the peace *of* God, available in any and every situation and circumstance as you acknowledge God.

So that we can make application of His words, Jesus provides an illustration:

Mat 11:30 For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

A "yoke" was a wooden frame placed on the backs of oxen to make them pull in tandem. The simple yokes consisted of a bar with two loops either of rope or wood that went around the animals' necks. More elaborate yokes had shafts connected to the middle with which the animals pulled plows or other implements.

The yoke was designed to fit smoothly so long as the pair was heading in the same direction and moving at the same speed. If one slowed or stopped or started in another direction, the yoke would chaff and pinch.

One paraphrase of this verse reads, "Become My yokefellow, and learn how to pull the load by working beside Me and watching how I do it. The heavy labor will seem lighter when you allow Me to help."

If you are saved, Jesus is your yokefellow. He did all the heavy lifting at the Cross and now He wants to guide you as you plow forward through the field that is your particular, unique life.

He guides you by His Word. The Bible reveals God's heart and gives you the freedom to behave within His loving boundaries.

Yoked with Jesus you will find at certain points the application of His Word is more lenient than you might be used to. At other points, Jesus' application of God's Word can be more stringent than you might be used to.

- For example - the Jews labored under ridiculous Sabbath rules. Jesus went about doing good on the Sabbath, healing folks and the like, demonstrating that you 'keep' the Sabbath in a spiritual sense, not in a strict legal sense.

- But Jesus could also be even more stringent than the Jews were used to. In His day the Pharisees had grown liberal with regards to divorce and remarriage - allowing it for almost any reason. Jesus brought them back to God's original intent for marriage and a more restrictive grounds for divorce.

The yoke, then, represents your entire walk with The Lord, guided by His Word, and I might add, empowered by His Holy Spirit.

Whether it seems lenient or stringent, it's not a burden because we enjoy fellowship with Him.

One commentator put it this way:

The yoke Jesus asks us to take upon ourselves [is] the whole Christian life and hope. Once we have assumed that yoke, God's commandments are no longer a heavy burden that weighs us down and destroys us. Instead, they are the expressions of God's will in which we delight, for we look for ways to express our thanks to God for the blessings of His grace.

"Easy" has a range of meanings, e.g., *good, helpful, kind, and profitable*. As a Christian I understand that obeying God is good and profitable; that God's commands are helpful and kind. So, if a command seems stringent, like Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, it really isn't. It's good and profitable to me and to the church and to society; and it is helpful and kind of Him to so guide me.

"Easy" can also mean *well-fitting*. Jesus has a particular yoke for you that is well-fitted to your walk, to your unique field.

"[His] burden is light." If it sometimes seems crushing, it's not. The apostle Paul, for example, endured many trials, much suffering, as he plowed the field of his life. But he could say of them, "my **light** affliction is but for a moment," and that it was working for him to God's glory (Second Corinthians 4:17).

If something is "heavy," then I guess I'm carrying the load all by myself. Or perhaps I'm not looking to the hope of glory set before me at the end of my field, when my plowing is finished.

Notice that the "rest" you will find is "for your souls." Always we must be reminded that God is working on us looking forward to the day we will appear before Him. The ultimate "rest" will come in that day when I see I have been made perfect having been conformed into the likeness of Jesus.

It's not insignificant to remember that Jesus was a carpenter by trade. He would have fashioned many yokes in His career. I don't think it's going too far to suggest they were the best fitted yokes anywhere on earth!

Your "yoke" is fitted for you in exactly the way Jesus can best walk with you to demonstrate His help and kindness, and that you might experience things that are good and profitable.

If you don't feel that way... I guess I should say "when" you don't feel that way - you might be trying to plow in a way that will leave a crooked furrow, having taken your eyes off of eternity and the Reward Seat of Jesus.

You may want to be in another field altogether. Or you may slow down or simply stop plowing for one reason or another.

Acknowledge God - that He is pure and perfect and will always act accordingly, to bring forth your good and His glory. Own your field; get up and plow straight, letting The Lord do the heavy lifting.