

Christ Invites

His invitation is to all who are in need – Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden. This is for everyone who is struggling with life. It is for the rich and the poor, it is for the young and the old. His invitation is universal, it is for all who know their need of God.

All who have a heavy load to bear, and that will come in a multitude of ways, all who feel a heavy load on their shoulders that they would like to be free of...this may be a heavy load of sin – feelings of guilt and we don't know how to be free from it... *well, said Jesus, come to me and I'll help you deal with it.*

It may a load of sorrow, the heavy burden of grief that falls on our shoulders when we lose someone or something dear to us – *well, said Jesus, I will help you deal with it.*

It may be a heavy burden of anxiety; worry and fear may have gripped our souls, especially at this time during the coronavirus...where can we turn to? *Yes, said Jesus, if that's you, come to me and I'll help you.*

I have come to those who are sick. I have come to heal the broken hearted and to give freedom.

1. Christ Offers?

He said, *I will give you rest for your souls.* How encouraging and comfortable are these words? Unrest is a great characteristic of our modern world. A world that is often in a frenzy. A world that is travelling so fast that we have no time for rest.

One of the big issues of our society is mental health. What is causing this – hurry – rushing about, not resting and so we are worn out? Over 50% of illnesses are due to mental health problems and we could put this down to hurry.

One of the great errors that our society has done is to abolish the Sabbath – a day of complete rest.

You see, God gave us the seventh day as a day of rest, not to spoil our fun but to give our bodies and minds a chance to recover and be refreshed.

But instead we have decided that we don't need a day of rest, and in fact we have decided to cram everything into seven days. The result? Our minds cannot cope and neither can our bodies. Jesus said, *come to me and I'll give you rest.* Isn't that a beautiful promise by Jesus?

200 years ago, Bishop Ryle wrote these words, *“Unrest is one of the great characteristics of the world: hurry, worry, failure, disappointment, stare us in the face on every side. But here is hope: there is an ark of refuge for the weary, as truly are there was for Noah's dove. There is rest in Christ, rest of conscience, and rest of heart, rest built on pardon of sin, rest flowing from peace with God.”*

The Bishop was onto something, and 200 years later we have not learned the lesson, in fact, we are deeper now in rush and hurry than we have ever been.

Come to me, said Jesus, and I will give you rest.

2. Christ Requests

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me... Let's not skip over these words too quickly, for in them lie the secret to our dealing with the burdens that we carry.

What is a yoke? Well, in first century Palestine a very important agricultural implement, every farmer needed one. As essential as a tractor today. For the yoke was the equipment that was put on the back of an ox to plough the field and the yoke that Jesus was speaking about would have been a double yoke. It was for two animals to plough the fields.

Indeed, ploughing the fields would have been a heavy burden on the animals, so it would need good fitting yokes to make their burden easier, and when they worked in pairs they shared the work load.

This is the picture that Jesus is encouraging his hearers to visualize.

But there is an important part of the picture that we need to catch, and that is that, metaphorically, we put Christ's yoke on our shoulders to go about our daily tasks, to meet the burdens and to deal with the weight of our problems – the yoke carries our burdens and it's Christ yoke that we put on.

Jesus reveals his secret, that we don't do it alone but that he is in the other side of the yoke with us, sharing our burden, and that is what he was telling his people.

In the previous verse, he claimed to be one with His Father in Heaven, In fact, he stated his special relationship with His Father. The doctrine of the Trinity is central to our faith and we believe that Jesus, the Father and the Spirit are one God, so in effect Jesus is telling us that God is with us – yoked to us, and He will give us rest as we plough our fields. Whatever needs to be dealt with, God will give us the strength to do so. *Come to me, said Jesus.*

3. Christ Teaches

But there is a responsibility put on the shoulders of those who would receive this rest, and Jesus said, *learn of me...* This is what we are required to do as followers of Christ. We are called to learn of Him. These three words are all about discipleship.

Learn of Him.

Look at Christ and discover where he found his strength to cope with life's problems.

Learn from Him.

Look to Jesus, and he saw behind the physical to the spiritual. He saw, in the flowers and the birds, the hand of God.

He took time in prayer, he cultivated his spiritual life, he lived close to His Father, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. *Learn from Him.*

Now, there will only ever be one Jesus Christ, but we are called to learn of Him and to follow in his footsteps and to do as he would do, and when we begin this

journey we become like him, and his values become ours, and so we change slowly and gradually into his image.

Consider Peter, the disciple, who was rash and aggressive and impulsive and loud, and consider how he learned to be a disciple, and the harsh lessons that he underwent, and then consider how he ended up as a loving shepherd to his people.

Discipleship is all about learning, and Jesus calls us to learn from Him. We learn through our bible. It teaches us, through the Spirit, how to become more like Christ, our ultimate goal as Christians.

4. Christ's Character

We learn from this passage something of the character of Jesus. He is meek and lowly in heart; He is not a hard task master but a gentle shepherd; He is full of compassion and understanding; He is completely trust worthy; He is meek - that doesn't mean he is a door mat or someone we walk all over – no, it means that he is humble and gracious, and welcomes all who would come. He understands our burdens and our challenges. This is our God who is on the side of the poor and the weak and the strugglers.

I hope today that this gives you a picture of our Lord and Saviour.

Are you yoked to Christ?

Have you accepted his call and turned to him for rest?

Have your sins been forgiven?

Have you shared your Grief?

Has your guilt been Guilt removed?

Have your worries been heard?

Let us hear Christ's voice once again today?

Come to me.

Here is the key to true happiness. Here is the secret of having a light heart. It all turns and hinges on our acceptance of this offer to take the yoke of Christ and learn from him.

If we have come to him, may we learn, each new day, to stay very close to him. If we have never come to him yet, may today be the day that we take his offer to heart and come to him.

All you have to do, is say a simple and sincere prayer,

“Lord Jesus, thank you for your offer of giving me rest, I come to you now and receive your yoke, which you tell me is light, and when I put this on you will be my strength throughout the rest of my life journey.”

Amen

And when we say this prayer, and mean it, Christ will enter our hearts and give us his yoke and share our journey. *Amen.*