

Come and See

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 August 2024

Preacher: Donald Smith

- [0 : 00] Well, some invitations are better than others, aren't they? A friend invites you over for dinner.
- That's a good invitation, isn't it? It's a good invitation because of what it promises to bring with it. Promise of food and friendship.
- But not all invitations are created equal. I received an email earlier this week from Halfords inviting me to come and see their new selection of tires.
- As kind as that was of them, that's not a great invitation, is it? Because what is promised is decidedly mediocre. An invitation to a wedding is a great thing.
- Because that is the promise of witnessing a marriage and celebrating it together with family and friends.
- [1 : 02] That is a great invitation. Come to me and you will find rest for your souls.
- Where, I wonder, do you think that ranks on the list of great invitations? Really, there is no better invitation, is there?
- Because there is no better promise. Rest for your souls.
- Who that invitation is coming from before we will accept it. Because as great as this invitation is, we would throw it straight in the bin, wouldn't we?
- If we did not know and trust and see the one who is inviting us. We're going to look at this passage in two points this evening.
- [2 : 34] And while the latter half is rightly well known for the beauty of its words, we must do some work to get there first. Because we must first have revealed to us the one who offers this invitation before we can gladly hear and accept it.
- And we need, as we'll see first of all, the gracious revelation first, don't we?
- Because what would happen with that invitation? That wonderful invitation, what would happen? We thought almost a little bit about this this morning. What would happen if a stranger knocked on your door tomorrow morning and handed you an invite that said, come to me and find rest for your souls?
- What are you going to think of that person who's knocked on your door? You'd do your best, probably, wouldn't you, not to aggravate the situation, but you'd probably also try and close the door as quickly as possible before adding yet another item to the recycling pile that you were supposed to take out four days ago.
- The point is that not just anyone, not just anyone can rock up with an invitation like Jesus does in verse 28.
- [4 : 04] To come to Jesus, we need to see Jesus. And if we don't see him for who he is, we won't come. Without God's revelation, we will immediately reject Jesus' invitation.
- That was the sort of the muddle that the generation of Jesus' day found themselves in as we were thinking about and heard last week.

They heard Jesus' words, didn't they? They witnessed his miracles, but they did not see who he was. And so they were doing their best to close the door in his face.

Do you remember their response to Jesus in verses 16 to 19? Joe summarized it so well for us last week, didn't he? Not what we are looking for.

Not what we are looking for. And here's very simply why that's such a serious problem. If you are not looking for what you need to find, you'll never find it, will you?

[5 : 17] If you are looking for the wrong thing, you'll never find what you need. I've probably said this before, but I am terrible at looking for things.

Like, it takes me a shamefully long time to find items that are just lying in plain sight. But I do usually get there. If I know I need to get out of the house, I know I need to find the keys.

And it might take me a while, but I will eventually find them because I know what I need to find. But I would never find the way out, would I? I would never find the means to get out of our house if I was looking for the completely wrong thing.

If I wanted to get out the door and set about looking for a pair of sunglasses, I'm never leaving, am I? I could look at the keys. They could be staring me right in the face.

But if sunglasses is what I think I need, I'm never going to find what I really need. Welcome to the human race.

[6 : 23] We all want rest for our souls, don't we? We all long for it. That is the door that we want to unlock.

And so what we really need to find is King Jesus. But left to ourselves, we are busy for looking for all the wrong things in all the wrong places. Instead of looking for King Jesus, we seek King comfort or King wealth or King popularity or King anything else other than Jesus.

Thinking that is what will bring us rest. And so even when he is staring us in the face, we look straight past him. Because even though he is what we need to find rest for our souls, not what we are looking for is fallen humanity's universal response to him.

That is what sin does to us. We go looking not only in the wrong place, but for the completely wrong thing. And that is where we would remain.

Unless. Unless someone shows us what we need to look for. We need our eyes opened.

[7 : 47] We need someone to turn on the lights to set our feet on a different path. What we need is revelation. Someone to enlighten our hearts and minds and show us who our souls really do long for.

And praise God, that is what he does. He is a God who reveals himself to sinners such as we are.

He reveals himself to people who have blinded themselves to his son. And that on its own is worth praising God for. But look with me at what specifically Jesus praises the Father for in verse 25.

At that time, Jesus said, I praise you, Father of heaven and earth, for you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for that is what you were pleased to do. Jesus does not just praise God that he reveals, does he? He praises God that he reveals to the people we would probably least expect.

[9 : 05] So far in Matthew's gospel, Jesus' kingdom has looked thoroughly unimpressive to the watching world. It's exactly what was confounding John the Baptist at the beginning of this chapter.

See, it is a kingdom for the poor in spirit, for the mourning and the meek. It is a kingdom with no standing army. It is a kingdom whose citizens will be persecuted. It is so thoroughly unimpressive by the world's standards.

And yet this is God's kingdom, ruled by God's king. And who else do we find in these verses is going to be brought in to both through the ranks? Who is going to be given kingdom passports to represent this new nation?

Not the wise and the learned. Not those who are impressive in the eyes of the world. But those who are little children.

Literally infants, babies. Those are the ones to whom God reveals his kingdom and his king. The point here is not to exclude the wise and learned from the Christian faith.

[10 : 20] That is not what Jesus is saying. The point is not that learning is incompatible with citizenship in Christ's kingdom. The point is that God reveals his kingdom to the humble and needy.

To those who are quick to recognize their need for help and their complete dependence on another. And because that is who God reveals to, God alone gets the glory.

And everyone is welcome. God alone gets the glory because there is nothing. There is nothing we can do to learn or earn his revelation.

It is purely an act of grace. It is a gracious revelation. He reveals his kingdom and his people who have done nothing impressive to earn it.

And for the same reason, God alone gets the glory. Everyone is welcome here. Because the condition on entry is not that we achieve a certain level of knowledge.

[11 : 33] But that we come recognizing our complete dependence on God. That is the contrast we are meant to draw, I think, from this comparison that Jesus makes.

Not everyone can do a PhD, can they? But every single person can humble themselves and acknowledge their dependence on their creator.

And so in building his kingdom this way, it will look mightily unimpressive to the watching world. Because it will be full of people who know they are weak.

But it results in all glory being given to God. And it results in a kingdom that will not exclude anyone based on ability or achievement.

It is full of grace. So let us praise God as Jesus did that this is how he reveals his kingdom. That he hides it from those who would trust in their own wisdom and understanding.

[12 : 47] And instead reveals it to those who know their need for him. Maybe it is worth just saying briefly as well here. Let us just not know this is how God built his kingdom.

But take it with us into our discipleship. It can be so easy, can't it, as we go about to look at people's strengths and gifts.

And think, wouldn't they be a great addition to the church? Think of all they could do for Jesus. Think of all they could do for us. But really I think we should look at people's weakness.

And think, wouldn't that be great for the kingdom of God? What a testament it would be to his goodness and grace.

Because then through our weakness we will see God at work. God at work, not through human strength, but through human dependence.

[13 : 55] That is how we will see him most clearly at work. And that is how the world will know this is his kingdom that he is building. Not our kingdom that we are building.

So God reveals his kingdom to the humble and needy. And he himself is revealed only through his son. Just look there at verse 27 with me.

Where Jesus says, 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. And those to whom the son chooses to reveal him.

Those are staggering words. Are they not? Here is a man saying that he alone can reveal the father, the Lord of heaven and earth.

He is God. The Lord of heaven and earth. You must have been committed to the son. He is the son of a man. Or against Jesus. Either he is God. Or he is uttering the rumblings of a madman.

[15 : 15] But Jesus has shown, hasn't he, through this gospel, just who he is. That he is God. In this eyewitness account of his life, we have seen that he was able to perform miracles the likes of which no one had ever seen.

And he taught with authority like no one had ever heard. And so when he says only he, Jesus Christ, can reveal God, we would do well to listen, wouldn't we?

Jesus does not consider himself one of many options to get to God, does he? He doesn't offer himself as one path amongst many.

He says, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Maybe you're here with us for the first time or you're visiting.

I think it's worth being clear on what Jesus says here. There is no other religion that will reveal God to you. There is no other prophet who will help you on your way.

[16 : 41] Jesus alone is the Son of God. And Jesus himself says, he alone reveals the Father. So either the Son reveals God to us or God remains hidden forever.

They are the only two paths that lie before every single person. But Jesus does lay his path before every single person because not only do we learn here about the gracious revelation of God, we hear also Jesus' glorious invitation.

Jesus alone reveals the Father, but Jesus himself invites everyone to come to him. Our second point this evening, a glorious invitation, takes us through the wonderful verses that we read there in verse 28 to 30.

Let's just read them again together. Jesus says, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

[18 : 15] We're going to just spend the rest of our time this evening considering why. Why this is such a glorious invitation. And we're going to do so just by breaking it down into four really simple questions.

Who does Jesus invite? What does Jesus require? Who is Jesus? And what does Jesus promise? So let's begin with the first of those questions.

Who does Jesus invite? Verse 28 again, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened. Usually the most desirable invites have the most exclusive audiences, don't they?

I don't know if you heard earlier this year about the wedding of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant. I have no idea if I'm saying their names right. But they were, they got married in India earlier this year, and he was the son of the 11th richest man in the world.

And their wedding was repeatedly in the news over the first few months of the year because it was an extremely extravagant wedding. I don't know if you saw anything about it.

- [19 : 35] There are no exact figures, but estimates ranged from, this is how much it cost, a hundred, try and get ahead of them, this, a hundred to a hundred and fifty million dollars.
- I don't know how you spend that. We got married in COVID, so we bought a takeaway. A hundred to a hundred and fifty million dollars.
- Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Hillary Clinton, Kim Kardashian, and many more, they all got invites. Mine has yet to arrive.
- I'm telling myself it's got lost in the post, but really it's no surprise, is it? Because in our kingdoms, the greatest invitations go to the greatest people.
- The greatest celebrations have the most prestigious guest list. But as we've seen, praise God, that's not how his kingdom works.
- [20 : 47] Here in Matthew 11, 28, the king of kings would be small change to him.
- The king of kings, the son of God, the one who holds the whole universe in his hands. He is inviting you, whoever you are, whatever burdens you are carrying, to come to him.
- The only condition to receiving this invitation seems to be that you are weary and burdened. And that is okay, isn't it? Because that captures all of us.
- There is no end of things that weary and burden each and every one of us. And for those of us who are outside of Jesus, those burdens will be too much to bear.
- But come to Jesus and you will find his burden is light. Come to me, Jesus says.
- [22 : 09] Come to me, you who are wearied by your work. come to me, Jesus says, you who are burdened every day by worries and fears.
- Come to me, you who can no longer bear the guilt and shame you carry with you all day long. Come to me, Jesus says, you who suffer under the weight of grief.
- come to me, you who are surrounded by people but feel crushingly lonely. Come to me, you who cannot bear the emptiness you feel every moment of every day.
- Come to me, you who feel the pressure to conform to a world whose values are constantly shifting. Come to me, all of you, all of you who are weary and burdened and find rest.
- It is a universal invitation but it is also an individual invitation. Jesus wants you to come to him.
- [23 : 31] to come. It's not just an invite to religion, it is an invite to a person. And that is good news, isn't it, because it is people, not programs, whose presence we find comfort in, isn't it?
- So who does Jesus invite? He invites everyone. You who are weary and burdened to himself, Jesus beckons you to come to him and he will give you rest.
- We'll think in just a moment what Jesus means by rest here. But before we get there, let us just first consider what it means to come to him and our second question, what does Jesus require?
- Just look there at verse 29 with me. this is Jesus unpacking what it means to come to him. He says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.
- Jesus is bringing us here into the world of agriculture, farmyards and the like. A yoke was, it was a wooden frame that would be placed on an ox or on some other animal in order to connect them to a plow or a cart.
- [24 : 59] And throughout the Bible, it is, I think, without fail, I'm pretty sure I went through every occurrence, at least everyone I could find, it is without fail used as a metaphor of submission.
- yoke is a yoke. A yoke is a yoke of subordination and service. So the Israelites in the time of the Exodus were under the yoke of the Egyptians.

God puts a yoke on a host of nations so they will serve Nebuchadnezzar. He breaks Israel's yoke to release them from servitudes to other nations.

Every time a yoke is mentioned in the Bible, it is in that context. Service and submission to a king.

And there's no reason to think it's any different here, is there? Because that is exactly what Jesus has been calling us to do through this gospel. Isn't he choosing to serve King Jesus?

[26 : 05] To live under his rule as citizens of his kingdom. So take up my yoke is Jesus saying come and live under my rule, my authority.

It means coming to Jesus as your king and lord, not just as your friend. And so then what Jesus goes on to say unpacks that further for us, doesn't it?

Closely connected is Jesus' second invitation in this verse, where he says, learn from me. Coming to Jesus means submitting to Jesus, and submitting to Jesus means learning from Jesus.

What does it mean to learn from Jesus? I think you should think less student in a lecture hall, more apprentice learning from a master.

We don't come to his word just to take notes, do we? We're not just to think his teaching is interesting, and leave it at that. Jesus is the master we learn from and follow.

[27 : 27] So yes, we absolutely must sit and listen and learn from his teaching. But to learn from his teaching means then also to put it into practice.

We hear and learn from Jesus and then carry out his instruction in our own life. Coming to Jesus, it must, if you are truly coming to him, change the way you live.

And it will change your life as you learn from him and you will never stop learning. We will never stop growing in our understanding of his word and never stop growing in our desire to live out his will in our lives.

that altogether is Jesus' invitation to us and every aspect is inextricably linked to the other.

To come to Jesus is to submit to him, to submit to Jesus is to learn from him, to be his disciple. And disciples do not just acquire knowledge, they live out their faith, as apprentices of their master.

[28 : 45] And we can gladly submit our lives to him because of who Jesus is. The third question, who is Jesus?

He carries on, take my yoke upon you and learn from me. Why? For I am gentle and humble in heart.

It's the only place in the Gospels where Jesus specifically describes his own heart and he describes it wonderfully as gentle and humble.

We think of gentleness, we shouldn't think weakness. If you want a picture of gentleness, imagine a seven foot tall strong man caressing a newborn baby in their arms.

His gentleness is not weakness, is it? But it is power under control. That is who Jesus is, powerful, so, so powerful.

[29 : 59] But a bruised reeds he will not break. and so we submit to him because although he has all authority in heaven and earth, he will not use it to extract from us more than we can give.

He is not harsh. Rather, he is gentle, tenderly caring for us every step of our way. likewise with his humility.

Our Lord of heaven and earth is humble, humble in heart. Again, humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking more of others.

And so Jesus uses his power for the good of others and considers the needs of others more important than his own. That is the king we submit to.

One who puts others first, putting our needs so far above his own that he who did no wrong would die willingly on a cross for our sake.

[31 : 16] He came not to be served, but to serve. That is why Jesus calls us to submit and learn from him, not because he wants more servants, but because he wants more people to serve.

That is the master we learn from. That is the one whose yoke we take upon our shoulders. Jesus is not a harsh task master.

He is a gentle and humble savior who knows our weaknesses and meets us in our needs. And so then finally, what does Jesus promise?

Jesus concludes his invitation with a beautiful promise, doesn't he? You will find rest for your souls.

Rest for your souls. The rest that every human heart longs for. A rest that goes beyond physical relaxation to the very core of our being.

[32 : 29] Because physical rest on its own is not what we long for, is it? It can certainly be enjoyable. We often look forward to it. things. But I'm sure there have even been times recently in every one of our lives when our bodies are resting but our souls are not.

We lie in beds and our minds are racing. We do not feel rested in those moments, do we? We have sleepless nights and stressful days even when our bodies are barely moving.

So the rest that Jesus offers is not about ceasing from physical work. He actually demands a lot from his disciples. But the rest that he offers is one that transcends our circumstances and brings peace even in the midst of life's storm because it is the rest of salvation.

It is the rest that comes from knowing that our sins are forgiven. That we are reconciled to God's.

That we have life everlasting. It is the rest of knowing we no longer have to strive to earn God's favor because Christ has already accomplished everything.

[34 : 01] as we come to him our souls find the rest they so desperately long for and he invites you to come to him and find this rest.

That is what Jesus invites us to. come to me he says me as a person and find rest for your soul.

Some invitations are better than others aren't they? but one invitation is the best of all. Jesus invites us to come to him and all we need to do is accept his gracious invitation submitting ourselves to his rule learning from him as our king and when we do that whatever whatever burdens we carry whatever is wearying our souls no matter what immovable weight we might feel they have he will give us rest.

So let us come to him each and every one of us take his yoke upon our shoulders and learn from him and find eternal rest for our souls.

That is Jesus' invitation to you to you that is a glorious one. Please accept it.

[35 : 54] Let us pray.