**Matthew 11:25-30 (ESV)**

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; **26** yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. **27**  All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. **28**  Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **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. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**“He Bears The Weight”**

 Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Over this weekend there were plenty of fireworks, flags, and food with friends or family. That is the style for celebrating July 4, but the substance is about freedom. This is freedom far from something convenient, empty of values, or without sacrifice. President Ronald Regan said in the past, “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same…”[[1]](#footnote-1) Our men and women in the military guard this freedom with their lives, but they cannot bear the weight alone for it stands on “We the people.”

 Yet, the fact remains even the people need more than the people. If God is not in the picture, is it surprising that man turns to worship whatever appears to bear the weight of power and authority? We need relief from it all! Of course, in our society of many religions even God ends up generic. Christianity alone offers God in His fullness by the Gospel. Then again, the church from an outsider might appear to be about don’t do this, don’t do that. Even inside the church, faith in Jesus might turn into about making the right decision, being a good person, or acting a certain way. This is true in a sense, but the Gospel is not about the work of our hands or something that comes from us. The yoke Christ gives is a weight of salvation to trust in Him.

 Only Christ freely speaks good news for all. He says, “Come to me.” It is not an altar call as if the focus and weight rests on me to choose. Instead, “come to me” shows the exclusive right of Jesus promised in the Gospel to choose us. None other has this privilege of authority and power for, “…No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” In those three words, “Come to me.” There is something great and good that alone belongs to Jesus. He is the sinless Son of God in the flesh come to save those in a sinful world.

 God has spoken good news throughout the centuries among the kingdoms of men. The prophet Zechariah revealed Christ would be among such warfare saying, “he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea…” Yet, in our land of free speech and religion, Christ stands out among the gods and great leaders we seek. His Word still invites an answer of freedom not conceived by men, but from God freely speaking for us, “Come to me.” If it were not for the gracious favor of Christ, God’s desire to save all by revealing His Son. Even the freest nation would be lost to self, empty of soul, and left to false worship without the One who call us to Him.

 Christ speaks good news because He fully sees our need for Him as Savior. He does not tell anyone to come unless there is a reason. The answer is straightforward, “all who labor and are heavy laden.” Like a laser guided missile, Jesus goes to heart of the matter. You see, this call of rest that we hear so wonderfully today from St. Matthew. It took place right after Jesus, “began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent” (Matthew 11:20). These cities in Galilee had the greatest opportunity like no other to hear the Gospel. They had it so good, but few saw it to be good. Jesus revealed to Jews the yoke of the Law that was only a weary burden of works in the hands of sinners. Likewise, He spoke to the heavy-laden Gentiles who the Devil weighed down upon the guilt of their sins.

 A similar fate faces us today in this free country. It is to lie. To either think we can live up to the law or try to justify our fallen state some other way. St. Paul confesses the truth, “For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.” It means coming to Church is not an exercise of how well I can hide my sin. Jesus knows putting on a happy face or just trying harder will turn against us. We can fool ourselves, but not the One faithful to save sinners. To ignore the call of repentance is to live a lie each day, to live apart from the refuge of a baptismal life. Jesus says, “you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

 Only Christ finally relieves us with the love He lays downs. Exposing the lie only leaves room for the better promise. He says, “I will give you rest.” The word, “rest” is more than some kind of time off from work but as He said, “rest for your souls.” If we can recognize the needs of the body, how much does God give spiritual help for our inner life before Him? This is the relief and refreshment of a yoke where there is no try or hide, but already done and perfectly given for us. Christ has carried the burden of every misstep against the rules we did not keep. He wore the harness of obedience doing everything for others we did not do or were unable to finish. He bore the loss and sorrow of a not so free world stuck in sin by His death on the cross. You need no bear it alone. None can pull their weight. What Jesus did He did for you. “Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope…”

 There is an alternative to the yoke of the Law and it alone rests in the Gospel. You either die in sin and works justifying everything along the way or be free in Christ who justifies you by His grace and goodness. He says, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” There is no option. You either carry His yoke hidden in Word and sacrament that is a promise or live a lie with the Law weighing down with no hope. Luther writes, “When sin has been forgiven and the conscience has been liberated from the burden and the sting of sin. Then a Christian can bear everything easily. Because everything within is sweet and pleasant, he willingly does and suffers everything” (AE 26:133). Salvation is secure for Christ delivers freedom by faith in Him to receive strength and support from God, “amid the wearisome changes of this world and at life’s end.”

 The celebration of American freedom is unique. It is always at the verge of extinction demanding to be fought for, protected, and handed down simply based on the fact of, “We the people.” However, even the people in this great land and throughout the world deserve to hear a better word from God. It dwells in the Church with Christ declaring by His Word and Sacrament, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is no need for pretending, no need to play with the bar of the law as if that is what saves. You are loved by God not for trying harder, working faster, or because there is a next time to get it right. Today, once again, Christ has done it all for you by your baptism. He has died in your place. No need for pretending any differently. This is the promise ripe for our times. The yoke of Christ is a weight of salvation to trust in Him. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/33739.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)