

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS
By Ron Harvey

Extended Text: Matthew 11:20-30

Focus Text: Matthew 11:25-30

INTRODUCTION

Now there are two parts to the sermon this morning. The first part is a look at the prayer of Jesus that we find in Matthew 11:25-27. And then, the second part is a look at the gospel invitation that he gives in verses 28-30.

And I think you will be struck this morning both by the simplicity of the gospel and at the same time, the complexity of plan of redemption.

Example: Studying God's plan of salvation is sort of like getting into a swimming pool. You can get in like my wife does - one toe at a time in the shallow end. Or, you can get in like my sons do, by jumping full body in the deep end and making the biggest splash possible.

And I've found that the study of redemption can be so simple a child can understand, or it can challenge the greatest theological minds of all time. And we are going to test out the deep end a little bit this morning, and then we will move to the shallow end where we can all touch bottom and get a foothold.

Jesus had been preaching through cities in Galilee and while he was preaching there he did many miracles. He healed their sick and caused the blind to see and the deaf to hear. And he calmed a storm and cast out devils and healed lepers. And the people marveled at his mighty works. And you would have thought that seeing these things, they would have fallen on their faces and repented of their sins. But instead, they didn't repent. And listen to what Jesus told them in verses 21-24.

Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Matthew 11:21-24

Now there are a couple of things that I want you to notice from these events:

I want you to see first the **wickedness** of mankind.

Now mankind is capable of the most vile and gruesome deeds.

Example: In the last few days, right here in our city, there was a trial of a man who killed his girlfriend and forced his little daughter to help him dismember the body with a skill saw. And he threatened to kill his own daughter if she didn't help him.

Example: And our news is filled daily with some of the most heinous acts that you can possibly imagine.

But, there is also a wickedness involved in rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. And these men in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, though they were in the very presence of the greatness of Christ and though they heard his preaching face to face, and though they saw his mighty works, they would not believe and would not repent. Is it no wonder that Jeremiah (17:9) said, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?"

So, from this example we see first how wicked man is. But also, I think,

We see the **utter inability** of men to come to God by their own volition. Under the most favorable circumstances, they will not come. Now you would have thought that of all men, those in the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, had the best opportunity of all. For Jesus walked their streets and taught them face to face and showed them his mighty works. But the Bible says they would not repent. (v.20)

And isn't this what the Bible confirms when it says,

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . .
John 6:44

So, there you have it. Jesus himself, the greatest of all preachers, preached the gospel. And not only did he preach the gospel, but he also confirmed it with mighty miracles, and the hearts of men would not be moved.

Does this not convince you that if men are to be saved, they must be drawn by God himself? They must be moved out of their own stupor. They must be changed by the power of God. And this is what Paul said in Philippians when he wrote,

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
Philippians 2:13

And that sets the stage for our main Scripture text this morning where it says,

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father . . . (v.25)

Here is a very amazing thing. The cities bowed their backs and rejected him. And Jesus looked up into heaven and prayed,

I thank thee, O Father.

What? Does Jesus thank the Father that he has been rejected in the cities? And the answer is an emphatic, “Yes.”

Now there are two things in view here, when Jesus thanks the Father. And Jesus is thankful first of all, for,

I. The sovereignty of God in redemption.

Jesus said,

*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because **thou** hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and [**thou**] hast revealed them unto babes. (v.25)*

Though Jesus was no doubt, saddened by the hard hearts and the sad condition of men, nevertheless, he found comfort in the sovereign will of God, and he prayed,

I thank thee.

As if to say, Though my teaching and my preaching has been mostly fruitless in these cities, and though my mighty works have not turned their hearts to repentance, and though they have rejected my gospel calls,

I thank thee, O Father.

“Thank you,” says Jesus. “Thank you, because it is you, O Father, who hast hid these things from them.”

You know, when the gospel goes out, God superintends that gospel. And he says,

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah 55:11

Now that verse suggests that there is a target when God’s Word goes out. And when God sends the arrow of his gospel it hits its target every time. And it accomplishes that which he pleases, every time. Now, sometimes, when that gospel arrow goes out, it whizzes right by the multitudes and they don’t even see it.

And Jesus said,

I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.

So you see, Jesus wasn't distraught that the multitudes rejected him. He was thankful that the sovereign Father was in charge of all things and in particular, the plan of redemption.

Now this is what he had previously told the disciples.

And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake the dust off your feet. Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Matthew 10:14

And so, Jesus, far from being distraught over his rejection, looks to heaven and issues thanks.

But Jesus is not just thankful that the sovereign Father is in control and that his will is being accomplished. He is also thankful for,

II. The eternal plan of redemption.

You see, Jesus was very aware, that there was a people out there who would never repent and who would never come and who would never believe and who were not the special targets of the gospel. And to those, God merely hides his gospel. But Jesus was also aware, that there was an elect people out there. Not people who were better by nature, or more prone to receive the gospel. But a people, chosen as objects of His eternal affection. And to these people, the Father reveals the gospel. You see,

He hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (v.25)

Now I am sorry to say, many people grind their teeth over that truth. But I hope you see that Jesus was thankful for it. He said,

I thank thee, O Father . . . that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

You see, the eternal covenant of redemption was an agreement between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in eternity past to redeem a people for His name. And this has always been the plan of God, to save those people. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said,

I thank thee, O Father.

Though the gospel was foolishness to those in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, Jesus says, “I know there is a people out there to whom the gospel will be revealed.

Now, not only was Jesus thankful for God’s sovereign plan of redemption, he goes one step further and declares,

Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. (v.26)

What seemed good in his sight? Hiding the gospel from some and revealing it to others.

And though this plan of redemption is reviled by men, to God, the plan seems very good. Though most religions place great value on working your way to heaven, God is very pleased with his plan of choosing some and working salvation in them. And our text says, “It seemed good in his sight.” And if it seemed good in his sight, it must be a very good plan.

And as a final note to this prayer of Jesus, I would like for you to notice that Jesus is thankful for,

III. The exclusive position he holds with respect to redemption. (v.27)

A. Jesus is the only one who has intimate and perfect knowledge of the Father. The Father and the Son have perfect knowledge of each other because they are one. They are the same essence. Every attribute that belongs to one belongs to the other. There is no weakness in the Father and no weakness in the Son, no imperfection, no lack of understanding. And, there is agreement with respect to all things between the Father and the Son. And that’s why it says,

No man knoweth the son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.

Now this is more than just an intellectual knowledge that is referred to here. This is a loving knowledge. This is a personal and a family kind of knowledge. And in this text, there are only two who have family knowledge of each other. One is the Father and the other is the Son. Now we know from elsewhere that the Holy Spirit is also included in this intimate family. But here, we consider only the Father and the Son.

And it says, *All things are delivered unto me of my Father.*

Now when it says “all things are delivered unto me” it is true that the Son has authority over all things. He has authority over the universe. He has authority over angels. He has authority over principalities and powers. He has authority over kings and princes and nations and kingdoms. But in this context, he has authority over the plan of redemption.

And I don’t know how else to say it except that Jesus has been given the keys to heaven and to hell. All things with respect to redemption have been delivered into his hands. And he has the authority to save whom he will and he has the authority to pass over whom he will. This is why the Psalmist said,

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little . . .

Psalm 2:12

Jesus said,

All things are delivered unto me of my Father.

Now, it says,

No man knoweth the son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.

You see, it is impossible, by human nature, to know the Son. And it is impossible, by human nature, to know the Father.

And, no sinful man in all of history ever had a saving, family knowledge of God, by nature. The only way a man can know the Father or know the Son is if God reveals himself to man.

Now our text tells us that,

B. Jesus is the only one who can reveal the Father to men. (v.27)

And our text implies that,

C. The Father is the only one who can reveal Jesus to men. (v.25)

So, Jesus says,

I thank you, Father.

Thank you for your sovereign plan of redemption. Though I am rejected by the men of these wicked cities, I thank you that you have revealed me to babes. My little lambs shall repent of their sins and believe me, for thou hast revealed it to them.

And I thank you that thou hast given to me all authority in the plan of redemption.

Now, after such a grand theological preface that Jesus gave in the preceding verses, you would expect that he would follow with very great and momentous words - words that would ring in your ears like the playing of a great symphony and words that would be unforgettable – words that would lead you and draw you to the very salvation that he is teaching about. And I think the following words of Jesus are just such words. They are simple words, they are lovely words and they are words of salvation.

And so we come to the gospel invitation as given by Jesus himself. And this is why I entitled my message this morning, The Gospel According to Jesus.

And if Jesus himself were standing in this pulpit this morning he might very well say, as he did then,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Now time does not allow me to fully exegete these three verses and I believe we could spend several weeks preaching from these verses and never exhaust their meaning.

But let me introduce this gospel invitation, by noticing first, that Jesus says,

I. Come unto **me**.

If anyone is seeking to escape condemnation and to have a reprieve from his sins, then there is only One place where it may be found. For Jesus said,

Come unto me.

There is no hope to be found elsewhere. There are no other gods where it may be found. Salvation may not be found in philosophy books. There is no hope to be found in knowledge or self-improvement. There is no hope for salvation in academics or intellectualism. There is no cure for sin in money or fame. There is no salvation in mere religion. But Jesus says,

Come unto me.

You see, salvation is found in a person, a beautiful person, a person who is highly qualified to save, a person who is powerful to save, a person who is willing to save.

And so, Jesus says,

Come unto me.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me, he says.

But then, I also want you to see that Jesus says,

II. **Come** unto me.

There is a coming involved. You must leave where you are and come. You say, "What must I leave?" And I say, you must leave your sin.

You see, those sinners in the Choraizin and Bethsaida and Capernaum wouldn't leave

where they were. They would not repent, the Bible says.

But Jesus says, “Come,” and coming means leaving where you are. You must get up out of your chair of sins where you have been seated for so long. Your tongue has been full of lies and deceit. Your heart has been full of evil plans. And you have been seated in that chair for too long and your sins are becoming wearisome to you. And Jesus says,

Come unto me.

And when you finally become so sick of your sins and your pitiful, hopeless condition that you can't stand it any longer, then you will leave those sins and you will come to the one who says, Come to me.

But, let me show you who it is that will come. We have already seen that the multitudes will not come. But some will come. And who are they who will come?

III. Those who labour and who are heavy laden will come.

Are you happy in your sins? Do you feel no burden on your soul over sin? Then you won't come. And the invitation is not even for you. This gospel invitation of Jesus will ring hollow in your ears because you are happy right where you are. You will never leave your sins. You are sunk down into the pleasures of sin for a season and you enjoy them and you will never leave them, no, not for even such a Savior as Jesus.

Ah, but those who labour and are heavy laden – Jesus invites you to come. You are very uneasy in your sins. They hang on you like a great weight. When you lie down at night you are restless and uneasy. And when you rise up you are anxious for your soul. And there is a pull on your heart and Jesus says,

Come unto me.

Now if you will come to Jesus he promises in this text that he will be three things to you.

First,

I. He will be your Comforter.

Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.

Now we have already seen that the invitation is only to those who labour and are heavy laden. But if you will renounce those sins that are so contrary to Christ and if you will accept Jesus as your Physician, he will give you rest.

Example: A few years ago I was driving to the courthouse for a hearing and all of sudden I had a side ache that would not go away. And after I passed about two exits and realized I better turn around and get to the emergency room. By the time I got to the hospital, I was doubled over in pain. I managed to get to the doors and they put me in a wheelchair. And I tell you, I was laboring and heavy laden. Now they had to get information before they could treat me, but all I wanted was pain medication. Finally, they diagnosed a kidney stone and they gave me something to relieve the pain.

And let me tell you, when the pain of your sins and your sinful condition gets so bad, you will come to Jesus as fast as you can. And he says,

I will give you rest.

Yes he will. The Great Physician will take you into his emergency room and he will graciously forgive your sins and he will cast them as far as the east is from the west. And he will promise you that he will never impute sin to your account again. And he will pick you up from where you were standing in condemnation and he will set you down in a place called his grace. And you will find that the burdens of sin will be washed away and you will have rest for your soul.

So, you see, he will be your Comforter. But also,

II. He will be your Ruler.

For he says,

Take my yoke upon you.

Now before you rush to leave your sins and your burdens behind and to find your rest, you should know that when you come to Christ there is a yoke to be placed on your neck. You will leave the yoke of bondage which so greatly burdened you and you will be glad to be out from it, but there is another yoke waiting for you.

And you say, “Why do I shed one yoke for another?”

And let me say that the yoke that you will shed, that old yoke of bondage to sin and self, is a very heavy and hard yoke and it crushes you day to day.

But the yoke that you will take on is very different. And it is different because it is Christ’s yoke. Notice, Jesus says,

*Take **my** yoke upon you.*

And Jesus says,

*My yoke is **easy**.*

Now the word for easy here, also carries the meaning, gracious.

Example: Now when you put a yoke upon an ox, the yoke constrains the ox and forces him to move in a certain direction. And the yoke can be painful and hurtful and it is a heavy burden.

But the yoke of Christ is lined with a soft cushion of grace lest his yoke would grind into our necks and hurt us. All of his commands to us are loving commands. They are not hurtful commands. When he would constrain us and direct our steps, it is for our good and for our benefit. And so he says,

My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Now we have seen that he will be your Comforter and he will be your Ruler and finally, we see that,

III. He will be your teacher.

For it says,

*Take my yoke and **learn** of me.*

Now, when you come to Jesus, you will be entering the school of true religion. It is a great school and it is fully accredited. It is accredited by the great Board of Education – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And you will become a student in this school. And you will attend every day and you will learn of Christ.

And he will teach you first by his own example. And you will seek to emulate him in every way. And you will watch him and try to be like him. You see, even in our text he says,

I am meek and lowly in heart.

And it will be your duty to be like him.

But it will also be your duty to attend upon his Word and to read it daily and to glory in it and to love it and to obey it.

And so, he shall be your teacher.

CONCLUSION

You have heard the call of the gospel this morning. And it is a gospel call spoken by Jesus himself. And I think none could say it better. And he says,

Come unto me. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.