

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 5 May 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

“Rest in Christ”

Matthew 11:25-30

In the year 1952, a Scottish Baptist pastor named **John Moore**—who, at that time, was serving as pastor of the **Seaman’s Chapel** in Glasgow—received a phone call from the secretary of a shipping firm there in Glasgow. Apparently, a young merchant seaman, who worked for their company, was lying critically ill in the Glasgow Hospital; and as he lay in his hospital bed, he was filled with anxiety at the thought of what might be awaiting him on the other side of death. The secretary asked Pastor Moore if he would pay this man a visit, and try to comfort him. Of course, he was more than happy to do so.¹

When Pastor Moore arrived at the seaman’s bedside, he found that the man was *very* eager to hear what he had to say; and so, he didn’t waste any time. After a brief minute of introductions and small talk, he pulled out a Gospel tract; and on the cover of this tract was an illustration from the book *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In the picture, a man named Pilgrim was climbing a hill called Calvary, toward an empty cross; and on Pilgrim’s back was an enormous burden. Pastor Moore explained that this character named “Pilgrim” represents a sinner who is carrying around a burden of sin, guilt, and shame, and who is trying to find out how he can be rid of his burden. He then explained how, in the story of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Pilgrim’s burden fell from his back while he was gazing at the cross of Jesus, and rolled down the hill of Calvary, into Jesus’ empty tomb. Pastor Moore then opened his Bible, and showed the man exactly what this meant. He explained that Jesus, God’s Son, paid for our sins *in full* on the cross, and rose again from the grave to conquer death for us; and he assured the young man that if he would simply humble himself before God, repent of his sin, and trust completely in what Jesus did for him on the cross, he would be *saved*. Pastor Moore then added that Pilgrim’s story had been *his* story, too—that there had been a time in his life when *he* was carrying around an awful burden of guilt and shame. However, when he understood the simple truth that Jesus died for *him*, he asked Jesus to forgive his sins, and to take those sins away, and to come into his life, and be his *Lord*. The very moment when he asked Jesus to save him, that awful burden had “rolled away.”

Pastor Moore then asked the young seaman, “Do *you* feel this burden on your heart today?”² With tears streaming down his face, he nodded his head “yes”; and with Pastor Moore’s help, he prayed a simple prayer, and asked Jesus to save him, and to be his Lord. When they opened their eyes, the seaman’s face was glowing with peace and joy, because the burden of sin had been lifted! Later that evening, as Pastor Moore sat by his fireside, the thought of burdens’ being lifted kept running through his mind; and he picked up a pen and paper, and quickly wrote down the words, “Days are filled with sorrow and care, hearts are lonely and drear: burdens are lifted at Calvary; Jesus is very near. Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Calvary, Calvary; burdens are lifted at Calvary; Jesus is very near.”³

This morning, we will be reading one of the most wonderful invitations that Jesus ever gave to sinners. He invited all who are *“heavy laden”* to come unto Him, and to receive *rest* in Him! Jesus truly is the Lifter of burdens; and if you have never had the burden of *your* sin removed, it is my prayer that you will ask Christ to remove *your* burden today! The title of this message is *“Rest in Christ.”*

Read Matthew 11:25-30.

I. The revelation of salvation truth (vv. 25-27)

In last week’s message, we read some of the most sobering words that Jesus ever spoke during His earthly ministry. As Jesus was preaching one day, He began to *“upbraid”* many of the cities of Galilee, because they had seen so many of His mighty works, yet had refused to repent of their sin and believe on Him. Cities such as Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had seen the Saviour of the world preaching in their very streets, time and time again, yet had refused to believe on Him; and therefore, their judgment will be far greater than the judgment of Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, and Gomorrah! Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, and Gomorrah were incredibly wicked cities; yet, Jesus said that if *those cities* had seen His miracles, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes long ago! What an indictment on Christ’s own people, who had been given so much light, and so much privilege, yet had spurned it!

Jesus’ invitation to Israel to receive Him as their King, and to enter into the Kingdom, was quickly drawing to a close. Jesus had come from Heaven as the Servant of the LORD, to gather the tribes of Jacob unto Himself; but as a nation, they refused to be gathered. This had been prophesied by **Isaiah**, seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth.

Read Isaiah 49:1-7.

In this Scripture, Jesus is called “Israel,” since He is the *ultimate* Son of Israel; and as He speaks to His Father, it is obvious that His soul is filled with grief. He had come to gather the tribes of Israel; yet, as a nation, they had despised and abhorred Him. Humanly speaking, Jesus’ number of followers was so small, that it appeared that He had laboured *“in vain,”* and *“for nought.”* Yet, His labour was *not* in vain. For one thing, there is coming a day when Israel, as a nation, *will* finally receive Him; and in that future day, kings and princes will come and worship Him. (This will happen during the coming 1,000-year Kingdom.) Secondly, because the people of Israel had had their chance to believe on Him, but rejected it, salvation is now offered to the Gentiles! Jesus came to be a Light not only to Israel, but also to the Gentiles, so that He might be God’s *“salvation unto the end of the earth.”*

One day, Israel *will* receive their King; but for the time being, most of them were (and still are) in a state of unbelief. You can almost hear Jesus’ inner pain as He had to denounce the cities into which He had poured so much love and attention. Yet, Jesus did not sit around all day

and mope about it. In **verse 25**, His whole tone changes. He now began to pray to His Father; and in His prayer, He thanked the Father that He had hidden **“these things”** (in other words, “the truths about salvation”) from the **“wise and prudent,”** and had, instead, **“revealed them unto babes.”** Since the greater part of the *nation* had rejected Him, Jesus was now inviting *individuals* to come unto Him; and He is thanking His Father for those few souls who were willing to humble themselves, and receive His offer of salvation.

Now, in a few moments, we will return to **verse 25**, and focus on it more closely. First, though, let’s focus on **verse 27**. (**Read Matthew 11:27**). Jesus says that **“all things”** (in other words, “all the things that He taught and preached”) had been delivered to Him by His Father. Simply put, Jesus *never* said or did anything independently of His Father. Jesus spoke exactly what the Father commanded Him to speak—no more, and no less. There is an *order* in the Triune Godhead; and though the Father and the Son are co-equal, Jesus always submits to the Father. They are constantly working together; yet, at all times, the Son obeys the Father.

With that thought in mind, let’s look again at what Jesus says about His relationship with His Father. He says, **“No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.”** What does Jesus mean? He’s saying that there is a unique relationship between the Father and Himself, which *we* are not a part of. This relationship is beyond our comprehension! *No one* knows the Father as the Son does, because their relationship is one-of-a-kind. From eternity past, they have had distinct minds and wills, yet have always been *one*. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three “gods”: they are one God, in three Persons! **First John 5:7** says, **“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are high and lifted up, and set apart from all creation. There is no other relationship like theirs.

Yet, is the Triune God *unknowable*? No! Unlike Allah (who, according to the Koran, is remote, aloof, distant, and unknowable to man), the *true* God—the God of the Bible—is *constantly* seeking a personal relationship with man! Even after our father Adam sinned against God, *God* came seeking after him, and said, **“Where art thou?”** God has been seeking us ever since then; and He made the ultimate sacrifice so that we might be brought back into a relationship with Himself. By mutual agreement of the Godhead, Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, came down into our world, so that He might reveal the Father to us. Let’s see what John the Baptist said about this.

Read John 1:15-18.

The prophets of the Old Testament were great men; but they all testified of a God whom they had never seen. God revealed to these men truths about Himself, which they recorded in Scripture; but they themselves had never seen God. They had no ability, in themselves, to know anything about God: whatever truth they knew of Him was *told to* them. They were like

messenger boys standing outside the palace of a king. They had never been in the king's throne room, or seen him: they simply delivered the messages that they were given. **Jesus**, on the other hand, was able to tell us the truth about God *directly*, **because He Himself is God!** As John points out here in **verse 18**, Jesus is ***“in the bosom of the Father.”*** He has been “in,” and “with,” the Father from eternity! He is the exact same essence and being as the Father.

Unbelievers often insist that “If there be a God, prove it! Show us God!” To such people I would say, “All the proof of God that you will ever need was revealed 2,000 years ago, in the Person of Jesus Christ!” God revealed Himself to us by taking on human flesh, and by walking among us. In **John 14**, Philip asked Jesus, ***“Lord, shew us the Father”***; and Jesus' reply was, ***“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”***

To see Christ is to see the Father, because they are co-equal, and inseparable from each other. Christ is the ***“brightness”*** of the Father's glory, and the ***“express image of his person.”*** Yet, the fact that Christ came into our world, and directly revealed truth about the Father to us, does not mean that we “know” the Father *personally*. You can “know” plenty of *intellectual* truth about the Father, without actually *knowing Him*. I can know all *about* King Charles of England by studying everything about his life, yet not *know* him at all. In the same way, a man (or woman) can *know* all *about* God, yet not *know* Him. That is why Jesus came. He came that we *might* be reconciled to Him, and know Him!

Read John 17:1-3.

Many people think that “eternal life” means “living in Heaven forever after you die.” However, that is *not* how Jesus defined “eternal life.” According to Jesus, to have ***“life eternal”*** is to *know* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. To have “eternal life” means to have a *relationship* with God the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. This relationship doesn't begin *after* you die, and pass through the pearly gates of Heaven: it begins *the moment* you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! The moment a sinner believes on Jesus, he passes from spiritual death to eternal life—a relationship with God that lasts forever. For true Christians, there is no question mark about what lies on the other side of the grave, because they know that they have eternal life *right now!*

Folks, do you realise how incredible this is? The all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, infinite, immutable God, who is set apart from all His creation, has *invited us* to enter into a relationship with **Him**, and **to know Him**! Of course, we will never become part of the Godhead, or know the secrets that are only for Him to know; but we can know *Him!* And the best part of all is that *everyone* is invited into this relationship with the Father and the Son!

Now, perhaps you are thinking, “Wait a minute, Pastor. If everyone have been invited into a relationship with the Father and the Son, then why did Jesus say, **“and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him”**? Does this mean that there are some people to whom the Lord never had any intention of revealing Himself? Is He saying that there are some people who have no opportunity to receive God’s gift of salvation, because Jesus did *not* die for them? And why did Jesus say, back in **verse 25**, that God has **“hid”** the truth of salvation from the **“wise and prudent”**? Let’s look at that verse again. **(Read Matthew 11:25.)**

What is Jesus saying here? Is He saying that God *purposely* hides the truth of salvation from those whom He never intended to save? Does this mean that certain people are “reprobated” to hell from eternity past, with no hope of being saved, because Christ did *not* die for them? If you were to ask that question of a Calvinist, he would have to say, “Yes,” because that is exactly what their theology teaches! However, there is just one problem: **that is not what the Bible teaches! First Timothy 2:4** says that God **“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”** Jesus isn’t saying that He doesn’t *desire* to save everyone: He’s simply saying that He reveals Himself only to those who will *humble themselves* like little children, and accept His offer. Those who think themselves “too wise” to humble themselves before God, and to accept His gift of salvation, will *never* know the Father. It doesn’t matter how educated you are, or how many degrees you’ve earned: if you reject Jesus, you will be **“ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”**

Read Matthew 18:1-4.

Read 1 Timothy 4:10.

Paul says that Jesus is the Saviour of **“all men.”** By the way, I did a study on that Greek word for **“all”** (the word *panton*); and guess what it means? It means “all”! It means **“all,” “the whole of,”** or **“every kind of.”** Paul is saying that Christ has provided salvation for *everyone!* However, the fact that salvation is *available* to everyone does not mean that everyone is saved. That is why Paul goes on to say that Jesus is Saviour **“specially of them that believe.”** Christ’s atonement on the cross is *offered* to all men; but it is *effective* only to those who will humble themselves, and receive His gift of salvation. This brings us to our last point today.

II. **The invitation to salvation (vv. 28-30)**

(Read Matthew 11:28-30.) Of all the invitations that Jesus ever gave, this is probably one of the most touching. To the people to whom Jesus was speaking, these words would have been like a cup of cold water to a man who has been wandering in the desert. These people were weary and burdened down—not only physically, but *spiritually*. All their lives, they had been toiling under the impossible spiritual demands that the religious leaders of Israel had placed upon them. They were trying to keep hundreds of laws in order to *earn* their way into the

Kingdom; yet, many of them knew, deep inside, that they couldn't make the cut! They were carrying around an enormous burden of sin, shame, and guilt, which they couldn't remove, no matter how hard they tried. (That is why **Nicodemus**, though he was a member of the highest religious body in the land, came to Jesus by night to ask Him how he could be sure that he would enter the Kingdom.) The people of Israel were also restless and afraid on account of the many false messiahs that had arisen, and had brought tumult, upheaval, and bloodshed. Every day, their lives were filled with the fear of death, on account of the cruelty of the Romans. Yet, even in those dark days of deep poverty and societal upheaval, Jesus was offering them *real* spiritual rest; and the way to receive this rest was to **come unto Him!**

Now, what does it *really* mean to have **rest**? Let's look at **Hebrews 4**, and see what Paul says.

Read Hebrews 4:1-11.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul uses two illustrations to help us understand the “rest” that is available in Christ. First, he uses **Israel's entry into the land of Canaan** as an illustration. Just as God promised the children of Israel freedom from the bondage of Egypt, and a place of rest in the land of Canaan, so God offers freedom from the bondage of sin, and a place of spiritual “rest” in Him. However, there is a condition for entering into this wonderful “rest”: **and the condition is that you must believe on Christ.** A whole generation of Israelites (with the exception of two men) *missed* the privilege of entering into the land of Canaan because they refused to believe God's promise! They were right on the border of Canaan, at Kadesh-Barnea; and God had *commanded* them to go into the land, and take their inheritance. However, ten of the twelve spies came back, and gave an evil report of the land. They said, “Oh, it's too hard. We can't possibly take the land! The land is filled with giants; and we are like grasshoppers in their sight. Also, the cities are high and walled up to heaven. We might as well go back to Egypt.” Because of that evil report, the people, who had been *right on the verge* of entering the land, decided to turn back; and they nearly stoned Caleb and Joshua for daring to suggest that God would give them the victory, if they would only trust Him! Because of their unbelief, *everyone* over the age of twenty (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) were barred from Canaan, and spent the rest of their lives wandering in the desert!

Likewise, those who refuse to trust Christ's word, and to take Him up on His offer of salvation, *will* miss the Kingdom—though they may have come ever so close to the threshold of salvation! That is why King David warned the people of Israel, **“To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”** What did he mean by this? Joshua had *already* led the children of Israel into the land of Canaan hundreds of years before David wrote these words: so David clearly wasn't talking about entering the land of *Canaan*. Rather, he was talking about entering the “*salvation rest*,” by believing God's promise of the Messiah, who would come to take away their sins. My friends, that same Jesus, whose coming David looked *forward* to, has already come to earth, and purchased our salvation; and he offers salvation to all of us. However, we *must* believe His Word, and take Him up on His offer!

Now, there is a second illustration that Paul uses to help us understand salvation. He also uses **the seventh day of Creation** as a picture of our salvation rest. **(Read Hebrews 4:4 and 5:9-11.)** Just as God ceased from *His* works on the Sabbath day, so *we* must cease from *our* attempts at “good works” if we would enter into His “salvation rest.” Why? Because even our best attempts at good works are tainted by sin, and are despicable in God’s sight. Isaiah wrote, **“For we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”** Our “good works” cannot even come close to earning our salvation. That is why God’s “salvation rest” is based upon a *complete and perfect* work—the work of Christ on the cross. When God ceased from His work on day six of Creation, His work was perfect and complete. Likewise, when Christ cried **“It is finished,”** His salvation work was finished, perfect, and complete. What does this mean, then? It means that our salvation is already bought and paid for! It means that if we will abandon *our* good works, and instead trust in the work that *Christ* did *for us*, we will immediately enter into His salvation rest!

My friend, if you really want to go to Heaven, you *must* enter into the “salvation rest”! In **verse 11**, Paul says, **“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”** That word “*labour*” doesn’t mean “labour to earn your salvation”: it means “Treat this matter with utmost diligence and earnestness. *Study* this thing carefully.” The Greek word that is translated “labour” here in **Hebrews 4:11** is the same word that is translated as “*study*” in **2 Timothy 2:15**. In that verse, Paul said, **“Study (be diligent) to shew thyself approved unto God.”** In the same vein, Paul is urging those who might have only an empty *profession* of salvation to **“examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”** In other words, “Make sure that you have really been saved! Study this thing out!”

I have seen genuine Christians go through a period of serious examination of their salvation; and I have seen these believers emerge from that dark period with the firm confidence that they *were, indeed*, saved. As they tested the Word of God, and checked it against their own testimony, they found that they were truly trusting in Christ. On the other hand, I have known people who, for years, *thought* they were saved (perhaps because they had once said a “sinner’s prayer,” which they didn’t really understand or mean, or because they assumed that they were one of “the elect”); and I have seen them come to the horrifying realisation that *they had never truly been saved*. Though they knew the “salvation by grace through faith” lingo, they had really been trusting in their own good works, and had never *repented* of their sin!

My friend, if you have never received God’s gift of salvation (or if you are not *sure* that you have done so), please don’t put it off! **“To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.”** Don’t let others turn you away from the salvation rest, because they say that the Christian life is filled with the scary “giants” of persecution, trials, or rejection by friends and family—or because there are too many expectations and commitments in the Christian life. Jesus is offering you real peace and joy through a relationship with Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit—and eternity in Heaven with Him. Don’t turn away from Him!

Now, before we close this morning, there is another important truth about salvation, which we need to know. Let's read **verses 29-30** again. (**Read Matthew 11:29-30.**) Jesus offers us "**rest**"; yet, "**rest**" does *not* mean "laziness." Jesus says that He has a "yoke" and a "burden" for us! That means that He has *work* for us to do! A farmer puts a yoke on the necks of his oxen in order to keep them moving in the direction that *he* bids them go, so that they can plough his field for him. Likewise, we must yield to the tugging of the Lord's "yoke" on our necks, so that He can move us in the direction that He wants us to go. There are fields to be broken up, so that the precious seed of God's Word may be planted in lost people's hearts. If the Lord's "oxen" start to pull off into a direction that *they* want to go, He will rein them back in. Far from being a life of idleness, the Christian life is a life of labour!

Jesus also has things for us to learn. Jesus says, "**Learn of me.**" Learning is, in itself, a part of the "work" He has for us to do. As we go through life, Christ wants us to imitate His meek, lowly character. Though Christ possessed all power in heaven and earth, He willingly humbled Himself, even unto death; and we must do the same. Do you "fly off the handle" when people don't treat you quite the way you expect to be treated? Or do you waive your rights, and respond with a meek, quiet, and humble spirit? When those in authority give an order you don't like, do you murmur and complain? Or do you humbly submit, and do that thing "heartily, as unto the Lord"? The world may look at this character trait as "pathetic"; but it is the character of our Heavenly Father, and of Jesus Christ, our Brother. Jesus' meek and lowly character won converts even as He hung on the cross--including the battle-hardened centurion, who exclaimed, "**Truly this was the Son of God.**" If you will yield to the gentle tug of Christ's yoke, and learn His humble character, you, too, can expect to see people's hearts won to the Saviour. A "**meek and quiet spirit**" is appealing to men, and is precious to God.

And what is the reward for taking Christ's yoke upon you? Jesus promised, "**Ye shall find rest unto your souls.**" Jesus isn't talking about a life of idleness; He is speaking of the "rest" that a person has because he is *redeemed* by the blood of the Lamb! Though Christ does have a lot of toil for us to do, it is a "light" toil, because we are no longer trying to do the impossible. We who are saved are no longer trying to earn our salvation by keeping the Law. The work that we now do for the Lord is a labour of *love for Him*, and not a labour of fear, because we are trying to "make it" into His Kingdom. *That* makes all the difference! Also, we are no longer under the rule of our old taskmaster Satan, and of our own lusts, which bring only misery and guilt. A life of joyful, loving service to Jesus Christ is infinitely lighter than a life of enslavement to sin. The Apostle Paul wrote, "**But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**"

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask: "Have *you* had your burden lifted at Calvary?" Have you been saved? If you have never had any intention of departing from your sin, don't fool yourself into thinking you're saved. To have the *shame* of sin removed, you must have your *sin* removed! Jesus will take away all your sin, and all the shame that goes with it, *if* you will repent of your sin, let go of your self-righteousness, and simply trust in what Jesus did for you on the cross. If you are saved already, I would close today by urging you to keep toiling for the Lord! Our yoke *really is* easy, and our burden

light, if we work in the *strength of the Lord*, and not in our own strength. *Rest* in His promises: *rest* in His strength; and *rest* in His love!

¹ Matthew Osbeck, *101 More Hymn Histories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), pp. 53-54.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*