



Study Series

Follow Me: Week Twelve

An invitation to follow Jesus: Marc Rader

Bible

Matthew 11:25-30 (NIV)

The Father Revealed in the Son

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. **26** Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 "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.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

29 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. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Sermon Summary

As we come to the end of this series we want to return to the invitation to follow Jesus. In Matthew 11:25-30 –before Jesus has even begun to predict His death and resurrection – He extends a remarkable invitation to those who have begun to follow Him, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” This invitation is pretty appealing as it stands, but when we fully understand the offer it is even more so.

Jesus’ promise of giving rest is expanded by His offer of a yoke. This agricultural tool is used metaphorically to describe being bound together like two oxen would be bound together by a yoke. This is how Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Jewish teachers of the law would use this metaphor in a couple of ways. First, to refer to the yoke of the law; that which binds us to God. Second, to refer to the yoke of their teaching; their interpretation of the law. Jesus appears to be using this image in the same way. In fact, in the very next section in Matthew’s account He records two conflicts that Jesus has with the religious leaders over the interpretation of the Sabbath laws. It would seem more than a coincidence that Matthew would include Jesus’ offer of rest just before the controversy over the day of rest.

Jesus is offering an interpretation of the law that stands in contrast to that of the religious leaders of His day (see Matthew 23:4 for his description of their teaching); one that is light and easy. It is important to recall that the purpose of the law was to promote relationship with God. This relationship, like all good relationships, was to be one that was easy where the actions and attitudes that promote the relationship came from the heart and were second nature. This is the lawlessness that the law was meant to bring – a situation where the law was no longer necessary because it had become internalised. However, because the law was not written on the heart, but on tablets of stone, it had become a burden. Jesus has a second-nature relationship with God; He lived out the law because he had internalised it and the made the relationship with God light and easy; just like our best relationships. Jesus offers to share this life with God, with us, and give us rest from chasing after God or trying to prove ourselves to Him (which is always tiring in relationship).

This invitation is based on Jesus’ close connection with God (as shown in v. 27) and comes by revelation which itself comes from spending time with Jesus. This is the revelation that Peter has in 16:7 when He recognises who Jesus is. There was no bright light, no voice from heaven, no angel, only time spent with Jesus that led to the revelation of God. As we spend time following Jesus we too will have a revelation of who Jesus is and this demands a decision be made.

In 11:20-24 Jesus condemns the villages and towns of Galilee who had seen the miracles and had not responded to this revelation. The desired response is repentance which simply means to acknowledge that a particular way is not working and to choose to do something else instead. In a religious sense it has implications for how we live in relationship with God and is tied to what we believe about Jesus. If, for example, we believe that Jesus forgives sin, we need to repent of trying to earn our salvation by being good. If we believe that Jesus brings us into relationship with God, we repent of those things that disrupt that relationship. And so on. This is the crisis of decision and faith we have been talking about. When we believe something about Jesus – whatever it may be – we need to respond by thinking about the implications of that belief and how it might change the way we follow Him. This is the ongoing challenge of following Jesus since our faith in Him is always changing and growing. We are continually confronted by the central question of the gospel, “Who do you say that I am?” and then left to repent of those attitudes and actions that do not line up with that belief. This is not a one off, but a continual process and one that takes a lifetime. It is, therefore, appropriate for us to end there; with the basic challenge of following Jesus before us.

Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation, their depth comes from a willingness to engage with the implications of our reflections for how we live our lives. Please take your time over them, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. The objective of a group discussion is to engage in meaningful conversation around a Biblical idea, invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time of reflection.

Have a go at question 1 before reading the passage.

1. Do rules bring freedom? Where have you seen that outworked, and what effect did those rules have on the lives of those who were invited to adhere to them? Share your reflections with the group.
2. Read Matthew 15:25-30 aloud. As you read, or hear it read, notice if there are words or phrases that seemed to stand out. What are they? (Try to resist the urge to explain why they stood out – this is about creating space for often familiar passages to say something new to us, allowing God to show you something). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to a word or phrase, take time, and share what you've been lead to.

3. Jesus invites us into rest, or the kind of life where the law of God is written on our hearts, such that we follow Jesus in relationship, rather than simply adhering to regulations. But what gets in the way of us living this way? What draws us back into following rules, or what causes us to give up following Jesus altogether?
4. How has this series shaped your understanding of who Jesus is? What do you believe about Him?
5. Have you discovered that any of your views about Jesus have been inaccurate? What consequent actions, based on these misconceptions, might you now need to repent of?
6. Where are you experiencing weariness or burden? Is it in trying to work out what this life looks like following Jesus? Is it in feeling like you're failing to live as you believe God would want you to live? Take a moment to write down your reflections on this question. If you feel comfortable share these with the group.

Prayer

In the light of your reflections on all of these questions, take some time to pray for each other, perhaps in 2s or 3s, bringing your burdens before Jesus. Invite Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to lift the weight of sin and expectation from you as you repent, giving these things to Jesus and asking His forgiveness, and then take some time to ask Jesus to lead you into life; To be the one you follow.